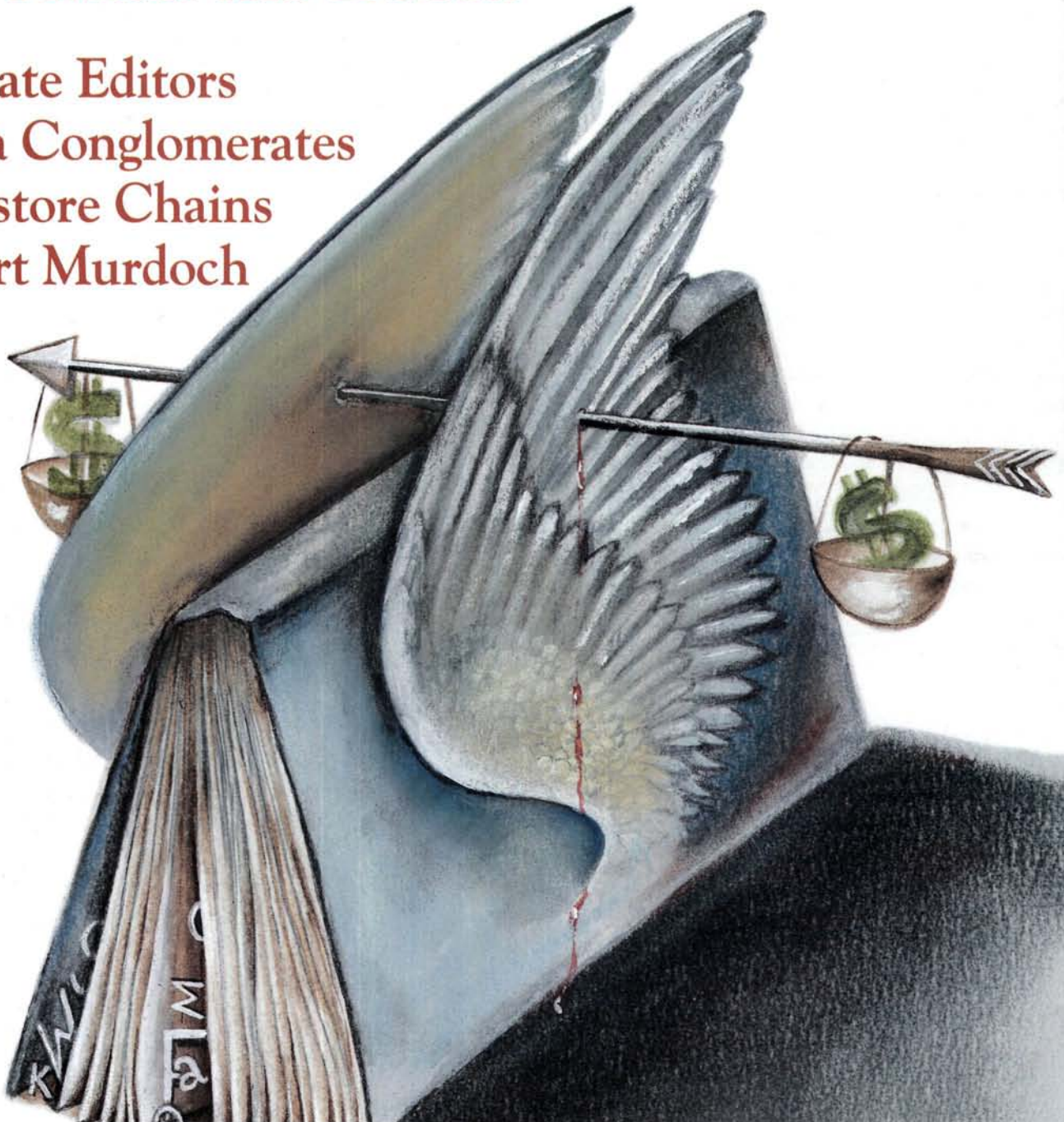
Chronicles

May 1998 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $3.95

Who Killed the Book?

– Illiterate Editors
– Media Conglomerates
– Bookstore Chains
– Rupert Murdoch



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A Dinner and Panel Discussion

Saturday, April 25, 1998

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Where do we go from here?

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* **CHILTON WILLIAMSON, Jr.**, *Chronicles*' senior editor for books, on the successes and failures of *National Review* conservatism
* **HOWARD PHILLIPS**, chairman of the U.S. Taxpayers Party, on the rise and fall of the New Right
* **THOMAS FLEMING**, editor of *Chronicles* and president of The Rockford Institute, on the future of the American Right

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

MANAGING EDITOR
Theodore Pappas

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Scott P. Richert

ART DIRECTOR
Anna Mycek-Wodecki

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Harold O.J. Brown, Katherine Dalton, Samuel Francis, George Garrett, Paul Gottfried, J.O. Tate, Michael Washburn, Clyde Wilson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Bill Kauffman, William Mills, Jacob Neusner, Srdja Trifkovic

EDITORIAL SECRETARY
Leann Dobbs

PUBLISHER
The Rockford Institute

PUBLICATION DIRECTOR
Guy C. Reffett

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Cindy Link

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Editorial and Advertising Offices:
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Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5813.
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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Samuel Francis and the League of the South

Dr. Samuel Francis seems to think that those of us who hope to reform the American empire by devolution are suffering from an "infantile disorder" and pursuing a goal neither possible or desirable (Principalities & Powers, February). Then he turns around and admits that nothing else has worked. His only hope seems to be a fantasy of "white Middle American solidarity" that is even more chimerical than the possibility of real political devolution. Dr. Francis seems to think that we need only change the "power elite." He imagines the Rockefellers meeting late at night in secret conclave to force the "Middle American majority" to accept Madonna, airbags, Bob Dole, Nigerian taxi drivers, and all the rest of the flotsam of empire.

Let me suggest a simpler explanation. We have just the kind of government and culture New York and California want and deserve. Dr. Francis would have Southerners hang on in the hope of saving others from the fate to which they have readily consigned us.

—*Clyde Wilson*
Columbia, SC

Reading "An Infantile Disorder" in your February issue didn't affect me as it did my League of the South friends who had warned me about Samuel Francis's attack on our movement. When I told them so, they wondered why I didn't feel betrayed by a fellow Southern conservative. I replied that there was no betrayal because Francis is no Southern conservative—he's his own unique creation.

I'm convinced that Francis's excursions into the darkness of Marxist-Leninist thought have overwhelmed his politics. The temptation is obvious: surveying a directionless American majority cowed by a well-oiled liberal-left establishment, Francis sought an intellectual undergirding that could support and focus the majority's disparate voices, and he eventually cobbled his "Middle American Radical" ideology from Marxist-Leninist scrap parts. Like Ayn Rand, who mirrored Marxist philosophy in her Objectivist manifesto of capitalism, hedonistic materialism, and atheism, Francis fabricated a conservative-sounding philosophy on a superstructure borrowed from the enemy.

Confusion, however, is inevitable when you try to hang conservative wallpaper in a Marxist den. For example, Francis argues that the South isn't distinctive enough to be its own nation. Then, without blinking, he asserts that there are too many cultural divisions within the South to maintain unity, pointing to the different cultures in eastern Virginia and eastern Tennessee, and in northern and southern Louisiana. The cultural differences between various areas of the South, he declares, are "at least" as great as the differences between England and Scotland. I would conclude that if Chattanooga and Norfolk are as different as London and Edinburgh, then the greater differences between Boston and all Southern cities certainly justify a Southern version of the Scottish National Party.

But a "Middle American Radical" peering at life through a Marxist-inspired, class-based ideology focused on "middle-income, white" Americans cannot comprehend Southern nationalism. Francis exhorts his readers to resist "the domination of the ruling class" by building a "Middle American solidarity." He then ridicules Southerners who refer to white Northerners as, of all things, "Yankees," and admonishes them instead to link arms with their Northern brothers to "stand firm" against the "overclass-underclass alliance." Regional differences are illusions, since "White Southerners are a vital part of the Middle American core, as are their Northern counterparts."

This echoes Lenin's ranting against the workers who passionately prepared for war against their "fellow workers" at the outbreak of World War I. When confronted with the German Socialists' support of their country's military budget, Lenin raged that "it must be a forgery!" Trotsky agreed, asserting "Workers have no Fatherland!" Now Francis tells us that middle-income Southerners have no Dixie.

Even the title of Francis's attack on the League of the South has a creepy Leninist ring to it. Anticipating Bukharin's and other "left" communists' opposition to limited free-market re-

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forms, Lenin published "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder" in 1920. Now, there's nothing wrong with lifting an occasional phrase from the leftists, or gleaning a lesson or two from their experience. But Francis's dependence on Marxism is too disturbing to ignore. He disparages the Christian Coalition's message as a "false consciousness," a Marxist term for an ideology that distracts workers from legitimate ideology. He identifies the Middle Class (he always capitalizes the term) as "the new proletariat." He urges Middle Americans to realize that "as another fighter once said, you have nothing to lose but your chains of slavery." He outlines a Middle American strategy in an article entitled "State and Revolution," recycling a title used by Lenin in 1917.

I fear he sees himself as a Karl Marx or Vladimir Lenin of the middle class, or rather, Middle Class. Dr. Francis, after having immersed himself in Marxist dogma for so long, seems to have gone native on us. Like Kurtz, he has become what he thought he was fighting.

—Michael C. Tuggle
Charlotte, NC

Dr. Francis Replies:

After engaging in a debate with me on "secessionism vs. nationalism" at last year's John Randolph Club meeting in Chicago and after reading my critique of secessionism in *Chronicles*, Clyde Wilson still doesn't get it. It is not what I "would have," but rather what is politically possible that determines whether secessionism is practical. Much of my argument in Chicago and the article was directed explicitly at the possibility of a successful secessionism, its desirability within the framework of what is possible today, and the likely damage a secessionist movement might cause to other, more serious movements of the right. Moreover, Dr. Wilson's claim that he and his secessionist colleagues merely advocate "reform of the American empire by devolution" is transparently dishonest. What they advocate is not simply "devolution" or decentralization within the national unity of the United States, but outright secession, the "political independence of the South by all honorable means," the dissolution of American national unity. I advocate authentic federalism, restoration of the 10th Amendment, as a means of decentralizing federal power and retaining national unity.

As for Mr. Tuggle's rather breathless and entirely fatuous detection that I am really a crypto-communist, more needs to be said. First, he is in error that I "always capitalize" the term "middle class." In fact I never capitalize it, though I do capitalize "Middle American" when referring to a distinct social and political identity. In any case, the word "American" is a proper noun and is always capitalized, except perhaps in the orthographical fantasies of the League of the South.

Second, it is true that I use terms and a certain amount of jargon drawn from Marxism, mainly as metaphors and partly in irony, though I suppose it is asking too much to expect those of Mr. Tuggle's bent to catch the latter. In discussing what I take to be an embryonic revolutionary movement, I consider that metaphors drawn from the main revolutionary movement of the last hundred years are appropriate.

If I have become like Conrad's Mr. Kurtz, Mr. Tuggle is like the schoolboy who disliked Milton's poetry because he found it to be so full of quotations. The fact is that Marx's most enduring influence on social and political thought is his identification of many of the main themes and problems of modern social theory—class, class power, class revolution, alienation, ideology, and proletarianization, among others. My concern with these issues reflects less the influence of Marx and Lenin than of later social and political thinkers who dealt with the same issues but gave answers radically different from those offered by Marx. Any serious attention to my writing should make this plain, but it sailed past Mr. Tuggle, who has confused my attention to issues raised by Marx with agreement with the answers Marx offered.

If Mr. Tuggle can draw himself away from ferreting out my communism long enough, he might notice that my thought reflects the anti-Marxist classical elite theory advanced by Burnham, Pareto, and Mosca (who ultimately rely on Machiavelli) far more than it does that of Marx or Lenin, my knowledge of whom I am the first to admit is superficial. He might also note my use of several other scholars and thinkers who are distinctly non- or anti-Marxist: Robert Nisbet, Lewis Namier, Fitzjames Stephen, Max Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies, Ronald Syme, M.E. Bradford, Forrest McDonald, David Hackett Fischer, Donald Warren, James Lincoln Collier, Raoul Berger, John Lukacs, and Andrew Hacker, to name a few. My characterization of Middle Americans, or rather middle americans, as a "proletariat" is explicitly drawn from Hacker. As for my use of the phrase "false consciousness," would Mr. Tuggle prefer I use his own word "ideology," which was also extensively used by Marx in much the same sense as "false consciousness"?

If Mr. Tuggle can get past the Marxist metaphors I often deliberately use in my headings and come at last to the substance of my beliefs, even he should be able to perceive that I am really not a Marxist and that disagreeing with his infantile secessionism does not make me one.

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

ALBANIAN separatists have been attacking policemen in the Serbian province of Kosovo for years, though only recently has the conflict escalated to the point where Slobodan Milosevic felt compelled to respond with a show of force. Not surprisingly, Milosevic's action was met by the familiar media barrage against the cruelty of "the Serbs" and bellicose statements by Madeleine Albright, who threatened Serbia with new sanctions.

The current American strategy is to force Milosevic into elevating Kosovo to the status of a constituent federal republic in the rump Yugoslav federation, which has been reduced to Serbia and Montenegro. The province would thus be detached from Serbia, of which it is the oldest and most treasured part: Serbian medieval kings left magnificent monasteries and castles as evidence that this was indeed the cradle not only of the Serbian state but of its neo-Byzantine culture.

This "federal strategy" is the untold reason for the State Department's insistence that the problem of Kosovo be resolved "within Yugoslavia," with no mention of Serbia. The rationale is the spurious claim that, although always a part of Serbia, Kosovo was also represent-

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ed at the *federal* level under Tito's communist constitution of 1974. Why a dead red dictator's arrangements—never freely negotiated, or voted upon by the people concerned—should be accepted as inviolable principles a quarter of a century later is left unexplained.

After Kosovo becomes a federal republic, the Croatian/Bosnian scenario for secession would be duly applied: the assembly in Pristina will call a referendum on independence, with the result a foregone conclusion. The proceedings will be eagerly ratified by the assorted worthies from the "international community," and *presto*!—another slice will be cut from the Serbian salami, with the façade of legality maintained by the powers-that-be inside the Beltway. If the Serbs try to resist, they will be branded, yet again, as "aggressors" against a new U.N. member. A greater Albania will come into being without a single editorial writer ever using the term, let alone considering its implications.

The Kosovo conflict has been brewing for some time. Down to the end of the 19th century, the region was overwhelmingly Serbian, although Turkish authorities had encouraged Albanian immigration—and violence—as a threat against an independent Serbia. Even down to World War II, the Serbs were in the majority, but Tito encouraged Albanian nationalism as part of his divide-and-rule strategy against the Serbs.

The Albanians' savage and unremitting abuse of the Serb minority attracted the attention of Slobodan Milosevic, who went to Kosovo and promised the Serbs, "No one will ever beat you again." It was this stance that marked the beginning of Milosevic's reputation as a Serb nationalist.

In the current conflict, however, Milosevic appears to be on board the American ship. Whatever he does, he cannot risk offending the "only remaining superpower." Milosevic depends on U.S. backing to preserve his power in the remnant of Serbia. As events unfold, he will present defeat to his long-suffering people as a victory, because the leader of the Kosovo Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova, will temporarily muzzle his uncompromising demand for full independence in favor of the federal status within Yugoslavia. But a few months later, when Rugova follows the example of Tudjman in 1991 and Izetbegovic in 1992, Milosevic's acceptance of the *fait accompli* will be justified by foreign pressure. He and Albright need each other.

This clever ploy *made in Foggy Bottom* may cause a destabilizing chain reaction throughout the Balkans. Its main victim will be the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, where the restive Albanian minority comprises a third of the total population (as opposed to only one-fifth in Serbia). Oddly enough, the United States supports Skopje's policy of centralization, and does not object to the refusal of the government of Kiro Gligorov to grant autonomous status to its Albanians. But by encouraging Albanians next door in Serbia to strive for full autonomy, and paving the way for independence, the United States will have unleashed a revolution of rising expectations among Macedonia's Albanians that will be impossible to contain.

Quite apart from practical policy considerations, American encouragement of Albanian intransigence in Serbia is flawed in principle. If the Albanians are allowed full autonomy leading to secession on grounds of their numbers (85 percent in Kosovo), will the same apply when the Latinos in New Mexico or Texas eventually outnumber their Anglo neighbors and start demanding full autonomy, or even secession?

If the principle of full territorial autonomy for minorities is imposed on Serbia, will it not be demanded by the Hungarians in Rumania (more numerous than Serbia's Albanians), the Russians in the Ukraine, or the Kurds in Turkey? And finally, if action by Serbian police against armed terrorists is condemned by Washington in the name of human rights and moral principles, what will Washington's response be when the next Kurdish village is razed by the Turkish army or the next Palestinian terrorist's home is blown up by the Israeli Defense Force?

—*Srdja Trifkovic*

TIMOTHY MCVEIGH may have been sent off for life, but the Oklahoma City bombing case is far from over. It looks like the federal government knew all along that Oklahoma City, if not the Alfred P. Murrah building itself, would be the target of a terrorist attack, and somehow (or for some reason) failed to prevent it. The alleged source of this information is none other than U.S. Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK), who was at the scene of the blast and spoke carelessly to a reserve deputy. The mainstream media have tried to ignore these allegations, but the *New American*, in a series of articles, won't give up the bone. In fact, the articles have caused a major spat between Oklahoma State Representative Charles Key and Congressman Istook, who could teach President Clinton a thing or two about the art of damage control.

According to the February 16 issue of the *New American*, David Kochendorfer, a reserve deputy with the sheriff's department, was driving near the Murrah building at the time of the blast and went immediately there to help in the rescue effort. When he spotted Congressman Istook, he approached him and started talking about the tragedy. Apparently mistaking Kochendorfer's uniform for that of a highway patrolman, Istook casually remarked, "Yeah, we knew this was going to happen." When a stunned Kochendorfer asked him how he could have known, Istook replied, "Well, we got word there's an undercover . . . right-wing, Muslim, fundamentalist group operating in Oklahoma City . . . an information source thought that a federal building was going to be bombed." Meanwhile, Kochendorfer's partner Don Hammons was speaking with local attorney Lana Tyree, who was illegally taking pictures at the scene. She said Istook had asked her to take the pictures and had told her that a bomb threat had been made ten full days before the attack which killed 169 people.

When Rep. Charles Key, who has long been skeptical of the official story of the bombing, met with the two deputies, he was impressed with their solid personal backgrounds and their willingness to take a lie detector test to back up their story. Kochendorfer, who agrees with Istook's stance on abortion, school prayer, and other issues, and had even considered himself a fan of the congressman, could hardly have wanted to smear Istook for political reasons. And so Key decided to take up the deputies' case, for as he told the *New American*, he "could find no ulterior motive or reason for them to concoct this story."

Nor do the facts contradict them. The *New American*, in its February 16 cover story, presents plenty of evidence pointing to prior knowledge of the blast. Many eyewitnesses, for example, claim to have seen bomb squad trucks and personnel around the Murrah building before the explosion. Conveniently, many BATF agents were absent from their offices in the building when the bomb

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went off (although this may not have mattered, since McVeigh placed his truck on the wrong side of the building where the daycare, not the BATF, would get the worst of it). BATF informant Carol Howe and federal informant Cary Gagen have also testified that they warned the authorities well in advance that an attack was going to take place in Oklahoma City. On March 22, a U.S. Marshals' memo had warned that bomb attacks on a federal building were likely.

To get their story out, Kochendorfer and Hammons held a press conference under the auspices of Key's Oklahoma Bombing Investigation Committee. Oklahoma City news shows aired part of the conference, and it provided fuel for debate on KTOK's Mike McCarville show, the most listened-to talk radio program in the state. After McCarville interviewed the deputies, Key, and Istook, over 900 people called in to voice their opinion, with more than 55 percent siding with the deputies.

But in other quarters, their testimony met with a different reaction. As Istook colorfully put it, "It is garbage and a total fabrication to suggest that I have information that the government supposedly had prior knowledge. . . . Any such suggestion is the product of somebody's sick and warped imagination." The *Daily Oklahoman*, the state's largest newspaper, did not report the press conference at all—despite the fact that its reporter Diana Baldwin had been seen at the conference taking notes. Suspecting a political "spiking" of the story, the *New American*'s William F. Jasper called the paper's city desk, explained that he had attended the press conference, and asked why the state's largest paper had not covered it. He was told the story was "too bogus." Jasper then spoke with the paper's assistant editor, John Perry, who said that any statement on why the paper did not cover the news conference would have to come from either the managing editor or the assistant managing editor, both of whom—as it turned out—had left for the day.

With its cover story, the *New American* succeeded in irritating Rep. Istook to the point of having his press secretary, Steve Jones, write a letter to the magazine characterizing his boss as a "pit bull when it comes to justice and truth" and charging that the deputies were simply "in error." (Istook, in media interviews, has reportedly gone much further, characterizing the deputies as stupid slobs.) In his rejoinder, also published in the *New American*, State Rep. Key asks why, if Istook is such a "pit bull when it comes to justice and truth," he had ignored the pleas of Key and Glen and Kathy Wilburn, whose grandchildren died in the blast and who desperately want someone to get to the truth of the matter. Apparently, other Oklahoma City residents had also reported "being treated arrogantly and abusively" by Congressman Istook when they questioned the official line about the bombing.

To make things stranger, a deputy bomb squad sergeant in Oklahoma has testified under oath that a Tow missile was in storage inside the Murrah building at the time of the blast. According to Americans for Responsible Media, his statement is confirmed by a transfer report filed by the bomb squad. A.B. Magnus, chairman of the organization, said "it is unconscionable that any federal agency could store heavy battlefield type ordnance in any public building—let alone one where a children's daycare facility was located."

So why would the federal government stockpile ammunition at the Murrah building? If it knew an explosion was imminent, why wasn't the ammunition moved? And how exactly did the government learn about the forthcoming bombing? Ambrose Evans-Pritchard highlights the role of a German intelligence officer and bomb expert, Andreas Strassmeir, who was perhaps the government's agent provocateur who masterminded the bombing as part of a federal sting operation. Why is Strassmeir now holed up in Germany? If there are any "pit bulls" going after the answers to these questions, they seem to be Ambrose Evans-Pritchard and the *New American*, not Congressman Istook and Uncle Sam.

(Copies of the New American's *February 16 issue can be ordered for $2.50 by calling 920-749-3784.)*

—Michael Washburn

THE ROCKFORD SCHOOL DE-segregation case continues, but if the actions of the federal magistrate's supporters are any indication, the tide is turning in favor of the citizens of Rockford. Stunned by recent electoral and courtroom setbacks, the leader of the local NAACP, a Rockford alderman, the mayor, and the superintendent of schools (all black) resorted to the last refuge of the modern scoundrel, and played the race card. What they didn't realize, however, is that—after nine years of federal control and $166 million—race no longer trumps rational discussion in Rockford.

The tide began to turn in November, when voters in the school board election re-elected Patti Delugas, a veteran fighter on behalf of Rockford's citizens, and elected Ted Biondo, a member of the board of directors of the grassroots organization Rockford Educating All Children (R.E.A.CH.). Although both faced well-funded candidates who supported the court order (and consequently had the support of the mayor), both won landslide victories. With the addition of Biondo to the board, a majority of board members now oppose federal control of Rockford's schools.

The day after the election, state circuit court judge John Rapp ruled that the main funding mechanism for the desegregation "remedies," the tort fund, was illegal. Under state law, all governmental bodies are required to have a tort fund to cover the cost of paying damages in a civil lawsuit. But in the Rockford case, civil damages—which would be paid directly to the plaintiffs—have never been levied. Instead, the school district and the federal magistrate's appointed master have been given a blank check to remedy discrimination. The result has been the destruction of Rockford, as those—white, black, and Hispanic—who can afford to move out of town have fled skyrocketing property taxes, while thousands of children have been bused across town, and both test scores and housing values have plummeted.

Despite Judge Rapp's ruling, in December federal magistrate P. Michael Mahoney ordered the school board to vote to levy $36.6 million more in tort taxes, and backed his order with the threat of jail, fines, and the possible removal of board members who didn't vote for the levy. Voting under protest, and decrying the loss of democratic self-rule, board members Biondo, Delugas, and David Strommer—all staunch opponents of the federal order—voted for the tort levy. They have since filed suit to gain intervenor status in the case, claiming that the magistrate, by ordering them to vote a particular way, denied them their basic rights as officeholders. Should they gain intervenor status, their first action would be to have Magistrate Mahoney removed from the case.

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During the debate on the tort levy, citizens had the opportunity to address the board, and Rockford received a foretaste and promise of things to come. Steve Bland, the pastor of Pilgrim Baptist Church (one of the largest black churches in Rockford), displayed a stunning disregard for the legal system by asking, "If the tort fund was right before [Judge Rapp's ruling declaring its use illegal], why is it wrong now?" Roy Dawson, the chairman of the local NAACP, told board members that if they didn't vote for the tort levy, "this community [the black community in Rockford] is going to rise up, and rise up beyond your ability to control it." Later that night, when Dawson saw Mary Hitchcock, one of the founders of R.E.A.CH., wearing a teabag as a silent protest against taxation without representation, he responded, "Maybe we'll start wearing shackles." While the local Gannett paper ran extensive coverage of Bland's and Dawson's remarks, it failed to mention—indeed, has always failed to mention—that both Bland and Dawson benefit from the illegal tort levy: Bland's wife is employed by the school district, and her salary comes entirely from the tort fund, and Dawson's wife is a principal at a Rockford high school, and therefore has discretionary authority over tort spending. A good reporter or a competent editor might find such details important.

Dawson continued his scare tactics two months later, attempting to prevent Biondo, Delugas, and Strommer from speaking at a Rockford Institute-sponsored rally on judicial taxation by smearing Institute president and *Chronicles*' editor Thomas Fleming as a white supremacist. His proof? According to a press release Dawson sent out on February 16 (the day of the rally), "The Rockford NAACP has learned that Thomas Fleming . . . is a national board member of the League of the South." *Chronicles* readers may find it hard to believe that the NAACP "learned" this fact at such a late date, since discussions of the League and Dr. Fleming's membership have appeared in *Chronicles* for over four years now. Indeed, even the local Gannett paper has mentioned the League, most recently in October, four months before Dawson "learned" that Dr. Fleming is a board member (perhaps Dawson only reads the articles that mention him).

The fact that the League of the South specifically rejects racism and white supremacy (and has been attacked by racist and white supremacist groups) didn't deter Dawson, nor did it stop Alderman Victory Bell, Mayor Charles Box, or Superintendent Ronald Epps from jumping on the libel bandwagon after the Institute's "Rally for Rockford" attracted over 500 people to the Rockford Woman's Club on a cold and rainy Monday night. Since Mayor Box is a lawyer, his decision to repeat Dawson's libelous charges was surprising enough; but Box went a step further, declaring that any opposition to the federal court's decision was equivalent to open revolt against the federal government and suggesting that Dr. Fleming, the League, and The Rockford Institute might want to restore slavery.

It's not surprising that Box, Epps, Dawson, and other supporters of Magistrate Mahoney's tyrannical actions have resorted to the race card; after all, they clearly can't win on the issues. Furthermore, they see their power structure crumbling around them, in part because of The Rockford Institute's previous forum on the school issue, which has been credited with revitalizing grassroots opposition to Rockford's political machine. Ironically, their attacks on Dr. Fleming and the Institute have solidified support for both, and have exposed the real fault line in Rockford—not between the races, but between those who believe that the citizens of Rockford should control their own destiny and those who will stop at nothing to maintain their own power.

—*Scott P. Richert*

George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (Everyman's Library). Classic fictional account of the underside of the literary trade.

Kenneth Patchen, *Memoirs of a Shy Pornographer* (W.W. Norton). A writer gains a *succès de scandale* when his publisher inserts asterisks to indicate the (non-existent) obscene passages.

James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson* (Everyman's Library). Sprinkled throughout Johnson's conversations are anecdotes of the 18th-century book trade.

Henry Regnery, *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher* (Harcourt Brace). A charming memoir of the life of a great conservative publisher.

Olivia Goldsmith, *The Bestseller* (HarperCollins). A spoof of trade publishing by the author of *The First Wives' Club*.

Wilfrid Sheed, *Office Politics* (Farrar, Straus). A comic novel about office shenanigans at a literary magazine.

Richard Marek, *Works of Genius* (New American Library). A publishing executive's novel about a best-selling writer who becomes increasingly irrational.

OBITER DICTA: The revised and expanded edition of ***The Martin Luther King, Jr., Plagiarism Story*** by *Chronicles*' managing editor Theodore Pappas is finally available. See the article on page 43 and the ad for the new edition on page 45.

Chronicles' art director **Anna Mycek-Wodecki** has illustrated this month's issue. An award-winning artist, she has exhibited her work in Warsaw, Paris, New York, and, most recently, Rockford.

Once again, **Wendell Berry** has contributed three new poems to this issue. Mr. Berry, the winner of the 1994 T.S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing, is the author of 33 books of poetry, essays, and fiction, including *Entries*, *Another Turn of the Crank*, and *A World Lost*. A native of Henry County, Kentucky, he returned there in 1964 to farm and to write.

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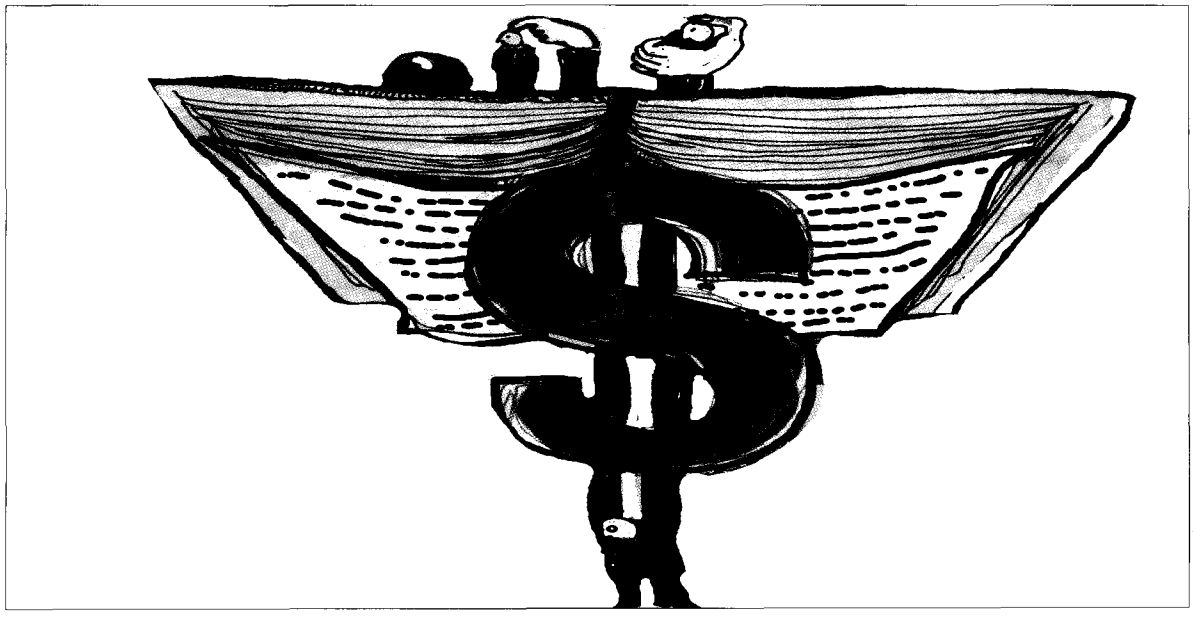

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Dial M for Murdoch

by Thomas Fleming

Publishers and writers are inveterate enemies. It is a combat decreed by nature, like the eternal war between dogs and cats, oil and vinegar, teenage girls and their mothers. Any real writer, no matter how mercenary or corrupt, cares something for the craft that publishers regard as at best a pretext for marketing (much as television networks think of programs as the intervals between commercials). Even a *Washington Post* reporter must occasionally want to write an honest story that does not end up on the editorial spike, while the most erudite publisher can scarcely help resenting every penny squandered for the advancement of literature.

In the early days of commercial publishing, when some writers might have claimed to be gentlemen, few publishers pretended to be anything but tradesmen. Alexander Pope, to show his contempt, administered a laxative to a famous London publisher, and Samuel Johnson was fond of telling the story of the publisher who married his printer's devil—a pretty girl, once the ink was scrubbed off. The first Macmillan, according to legend, had to walk half-way across Britain to start the career that made his fortune, but his grandson Harold became not only Prime Minister, but a Tory wet enough to raise the taxes on every man who made an honest living.

In the earlier part of this century, publishers were still not quite respectable, including the press lords whose pretensions G.K. Chesterton so enjoyed deflating. Chesterton lost his job at a Cadbury paper after he published a poem that included the lines:

> Tea, although an Oriental,
> Is a gentleman at least;
> Cocoa is a cad and coward,
> Cocoa is a vulgar beast.

Cadbury's rivals in Britain and America—the Beaverbrooks and Hearsts—had the same thin skin and indifference to fact. For media magnates, the press is not an instrument for disseminating truth, it is an engine of power. The great object in any industry, whether it is computer software, cocaine, or publishing, is to secure a monopoly, and the great newspaper chains of the United States—Gannett, in particular—have dedicated themselves, with singleness of purpose and contempt for legal niceties, to the task of ensuring that every city in America is a one-newspaper town.

The implications for American conservatives and other dissidents are obvious. Lack of competition in business inevitably entails ideological rigidity, and since the media monopolies are an important part of the establishment, the managers who control the great newspapers and publishing houses take a dim view of reactionaries and radicals who criticize the regime. Our local Gannett paper, after buying up its rival (a monthly city magazine), is now in a position to treat the old newspaperman's ideals of facts and fairness like a rare port, something to be brought out on ceremonial occasions and served by the thimbleful. Propaganda and slander are the beer and pizza of the chain newspaper and the network news. Ask Richard Jewell.

Still, even the great newspaper chains must compete with each other, with electronic media, with magazines, and with the processed book-products that make their way onto the best-seller lists. A dissident book can occasionally pop up on a best-seller list, blinking in the bright lights and trying vainly to make small talk with its neighbors. These freaks of the industry are becoming rarer, as competition disappears. Some of the media chains, after all, do own magazines; others publish books; some own television stations. In fact, Ted Turner has wrapped his tentacles around dozens of media conglomerates. But even

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Mr. Turner and his wife (former star of soft-porn flicks like *Barbarella*) are no match for the greatest press lord to date: Rupert Murdoch.

Mr. Turner, on the grounds that it takes one to know one, has called Mr. Murdoch another "Adolf Hitler" (which puts him in company with Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, Pat Buchanan, and the editors of this magazine), but like Turner himself, Murdoch is more the two-bit thug multiplied a billion times. Far from planning world conquest, these great men dream of nothing bolder than topless girls on page three or slugging it out over who can dumb down the public faster. "Murdoch's credo," writes Stephen Glover in the London *Telegraph*, "is to give people what they want," and his quarrel with Ted Turner is really over plans to set up a 24-hour news service in competition with CNN.

Even to list (much less describe) Mr. Murdoch's holdings might take up all the space of this magazine. He owns newspapers, publishing houses, magazines, television stations, and satellite networks. Here in the United States, his print holdings include the book publishing conglomerate HarperCollins, the *New York Post*, and the *Weekly Standard*. He owns the FOX television network and more individual American television stations than anyone, American or Australian.

On any one day of the week, Murdoch's employees may pretend to take an independent line, but Mr. Murdoch, like any owner and master, calls the shots whenever one of his private interests is involved. Of course, Murdoch is a shy and unassuming person, a Uriah Heep among media moguls, and when it came out that he had dined with Speaker Gingrich a few years ago, he categorically denied that it had anything to do with Gingrich's HarperCollins contract, much less with any of the federal regulatory problems that the Murdoch empire was facing. A man with so many claims on his time, he explained, simply could not attend to the details of a single book deal.

In February, however, it turned out that Mr. Murdoch does take an interest in some books. According to stories published in the *Telegraph*, Murdoch squelched the publication of a HarperCollins book written by Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong. Patten had been paid an advance of £125,000, but HarperCollins executives pulled the plug on the deal, claiming the book did not meet expectations. "The material . . . does not live up to the original outline," explained Adrian Bourne, managing director of HarperCollins' trade book division. However, Patten's editor at HarperCollins, Stuart Proffitt, had described the first six chapters as "inspiring, brilliant, and important." Reluctant to support the firm's official story, Proffitt was handed a gag order. He promptly quit.

Murdoch now says that he views the deal as a mistake. He told the London *Times*, which he owns, that his publishers "screwed up" in accepting the book, which Murdoch dislikes for personal reasons: "I have always been a bit negative about [Patten] ever since I thought he was undermining Thatcher. And I think he made a bit of a fool of himself out there after suddenly discovering democracy at the end of a 100-year rule."

Taken at face value, Murdoch's explanation of his behavior reveals him as petty, political, and irrational: petty in letting his personal feelings dictate an irresponsible business decision, political in putting his "loyalty" to Mrs. Thatcher above the credibility of his firm, and irrational in refusing to see the difference between Hong Kong's 100 years as a crown colony and her emerging status as a possession of what may be the most brutal and repressive dictatorship in the world.

Murdoch, often described as a conservative, has been less than consistent in his loyalty to the Baroness Thatcher and her party. These days, he is counting on Tony Blair, whom his *Sun* newspaper supported in the last election, to protect him from the wrath of both Tory and Labour MPs who accuse Murdoch of undercutting his newspaper rivals in a bid to make the U.K. a one-newspaper country. Murdoch's critics charge his company with using the profits from his BSkyB satellite television network to subsidize the London *Times*' "predatory price strategy." Mr. Blair, caught between the idealism of his anti-monopoly campaign rhetoric and the boundless wrath of KRM (as Keith Rupert Murdoch is known to his friends), is facing a defection of his own MPs, who are angry with Blair's government for refusing to back a House of Lords amendment to the "Competition Bill." Mr. Blair's ministers insist that the so-called Murdoch amendment, aimed at curbing the *Times*' pricing strategy, is unnecessary, but a better word might be inconvenient.

Murdoch, meanwhile, is fighting a battle on several fronts: predatory pricing in the U.K., reports of declining earnings around the world, and an investigation into irregularities in his News Corporation's tax records. Add to these woes, now, a string of writers making public defections from HarperCollins. Timothy Garton Ash has already left, and abandoning the Murdoch ship is suddenly the literary rage. "One is appalled to think," Booker Prize-winner Penelope Fitzgerald told the *Telegraph*, "that someone can buy a publisher like a soap factory and then scrap the part they don't want." Doris Lessing finds the affair shocking: "It is so shocking I can't find words for it." (If Lessing's dyslexia proves to be permanent, perhaps HarperCollins is better off without her.)

This is, of course, not the only occasion on which an author has been disciplined for writing an inconvenient book. In fact, at almost the same time that Murdoch was cutting Chris Patten, ABC News forced veteran military reporter Bob Zelnick to leave the network for signing a contract with the conservative Regnery Publishing company to do a book on Al Gore. Zelnick's reputation for candor and his previous Regnery book, *Backfire: A Reporter's Look at Affirmative Action*, apparently alarmed ABC.

What has many literati upset, however, is the ugly duplicity of Murdoch and company. While HarperCollins executives were cooking up a cover story (the memo has been leaked) explaining their objections to a book they had not read, crusading reporters at the *Telegraph* were uncovering a more practical basis for Murdoch's concern. The media Hitler, it seems, is very sensitive to pressure from the Chinese government, which detests Mr. Patten. During the months preceding the Hong Kong takeover, Patten's outspoken criticisms of the communists made him, in the words of the *Telegraph*'s Philip Johnson, "a target of abuse by the regime" which "denounced him as 'a whore,' a 'criminal of a thousand antiquities,' a 'serpent,' and—mysteriously—a 'tango dancer.'" Murdoch has more than a billion pounds invested in Asian media and has openly declared (in a Tokyo speech last May) that "China is a distinctive market with distinctive social and moral values that Western companies like News Corporation must learn to abide by." Part of the learning process involved pulling the BBC, which had been too objective in its reporting on Tiananmen Square, off of his Star TV network. Compared with the BBC, Chris Patten's book deal is a trifle, and Murdoch's publishing executives have

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apologized to Patten and promised him a settlement of an undisclosed amount.

The darker side of the picture has been the silence of the Murdoch-owned London *Times*. The *Times*' media editor, just after the nick of time, admitted that it was a mistake not to cover the story but denied that he had been "leant" on, insisting the whole thing was more "cock-up than conspiracy," but other *Times* editors—journalists of the highest reputation—have been put in a very uncomfortable position. Henry Porter, writing in the *Independent*, complained that not one of four prominent columnists writing for the *Times* had "written a word about one of the most shameful acts of suppression in recent publishing history."

Some, at least, of Murdoch's British journalists have criticized their boss's kow-towing to the Chinese communists. The *Times*' recently retired East Asia correspondent, Jonathan Mirsky, is now the newspaper's China writer, but at a meeting of the Freedom Forum European Centre (reported by the *Telegraph*) he complained that "The *Times* has simply decided, because of Murdoch's interests, not to cover China in a serious way."

Murdoch's American employees and apologists have been less forthcoming. For years we have been hearing from Manhattan conservatives about this staunch conservative immigrant who has been kind enough to enrich our impoverished culture. How they mocked the late Mike Royko for refusing to work for Murdoch at the *Chicago Sun-Times*. But there is no word yet on the Chris Patten scandal from John Podhoretz (Scott McConnell's unworthy successor at the *New York Post*), and Bill Kristol, top dog at KRM's *Weekly Standard*, has yet to deliver his bull against Patten for standing in the way of free trade with Asia. Nothing, even, from the *Standard*'s crusading David Frum, who has made a profession of pointing out the mote in the eye of anyone to his right.

What a conservative daisy chain: a Canadian working for an American publication owned by an Australian who takes orders from the Chinese. Anyone who thinks the *Weekly Standard* is not influenced by Murdoch should take a look at its February 9th cover—a cartoon almost as raunchy as the photographs in the *Sun*. The *Standard* is supposed to represent the future of the American right. Perhaps it does. After all, the *Standard* is the magazine equivalent of Trent Lott: owned by a foreigner, out of touch with America, working for the enemies of our country.

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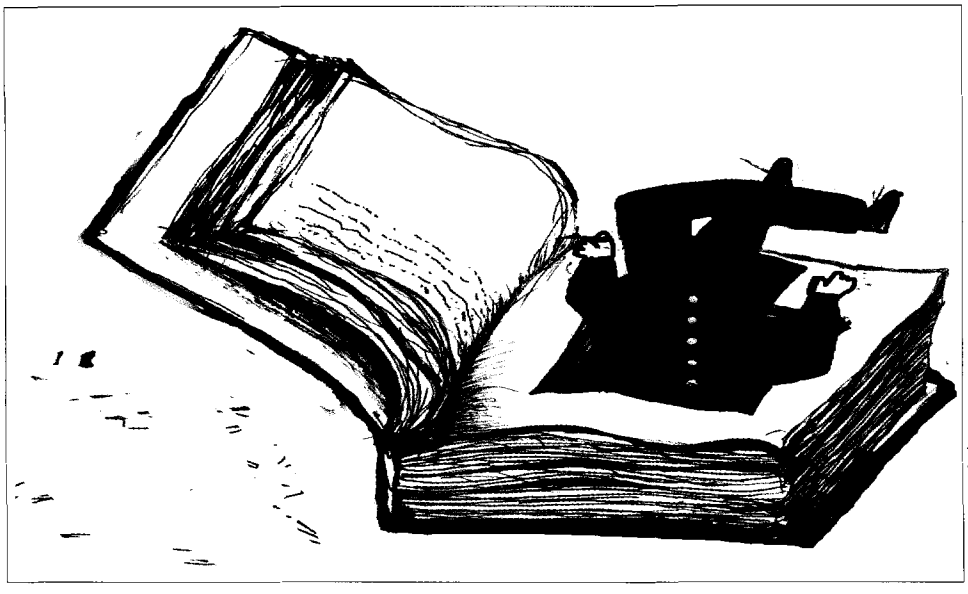
A Hothouse of Goofiness

The American Book Industry

by Tony Outhwaite



Anna Mecek-Wodecki

The renowned American jazzman Charlie Parker, introduced to Jean-Paul Sartre in a Paris club during the 1949 jazz festival, reportedly said, "I'm very glad to have met you, Mr. Sartre. I like your playing very much." According to writer Boris Vian, who also played trumpet and often served as master of ceremonies at the club, Sartre merely stared back at Parker in silence.

The story is probably not apocryphal: Parker, the free spirit and inveterate master of the put-on, was not above tweaking the high and mighty whether he knew who they were or not; Sartre, pompous in his growing celebrity, was humorless and intolerant by nature. Still, this was essentially a trivial incident, the chance meeting of two disparate creative souls on their way to world fame.

Were this to involve members of today's American book-publishing scene, though, it would probably be turned through descriptive hubris into something quite different: a protest against racist oppression and colonialism, perhaps, or a principled defense of artistic integrity. Unfortunately, such a perverse view would be all too typical of many of today's publishing elites. Sad to say, many years past its glory days as a business for serious well-meaning gentlemen like Maxwell Perkins and Bennett Cerf or brilliant headstrong iconoclasts like Alfred Knopf and Horace Liveright, as the millennium approaches the book business appears rudderless, adrift on a tide of ideological obtuseness and mean-spiritedness, *lèche-cul* trendiness, and absurd operating practices, its communal values and common sense in tatters.

Rather than people of Cerf's droll gregariousness or of the dedicated gentility of top professionals like Hiram Haydn, Cass Canfield, or Ken McCormick, the trade-book industry of the 1990's has been infiltrated by people more influenced by movies and other visual media. Preoccupied with the minutiae of deal-making, obsessed with extraneous concepts like the Internet, and desperate for a quick score to brag about, many of these moderns possess in equal parts an often hilarious blinkered arrogance, self-infatuation, and an anti-Americanism that almost makes Bill Clinton look patriotic by comparison. It is no wonder that the industry voted overwhelmingly for him twice, even held fundraising parties for him and the Vice Bubba, and persists in the belief that he is brilliant; career liar, thief, and fraud he may be, but compared to many industry insiders he *is* brilliant, and probably reads more books than any of them. Today's publishing types may also be reassured that, like the President, some of their own clever fakers can succeed big-time, and at industry cocktail receptions there they all are, cranky, badly dressed, and on the make, complaining bitterly about each other, about America, and most of all about the industry they have done so much to trash.

When, the morning after the 1994 elections, news anchor Peter Jennings made his grave pronouncement that the country had had "a temper tantrum" the previous day, he might have been describing book publishing in its current state, for these days the industry seems to carry a permanent chip on its shoulder. There are indeed many perceptive, well-meaning folks in the business, and yet they, too, have allowed a general attitude

Tony Outhwaite is a literary agent in New York City.

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of almost adolescent, antagonistic willfulness to take hold, what Hunter Thompson might call "bad craziness." Good sense has yielded to a lunatic enthusiasm for pointless multiculturalism, a tabloid appetite for scandal, trash, and weirdness, and continued unreasoning support for peculiar, destructive ideas like revisionism, socialism, victimization, and the petulant viewpoint that all who do not agree with them are somehow unclean and must do penance. Thus the book business is in danger of being forever stuck in a 1960's time-warp of its own creation. Far from its traditional role as purveyor of ideas and literature or defender of free speech, the industry has painted itself into a corner, urging too many of its insiders to waste valuable time and brainpower in pumping up unwarranted contempt for conservatives, the military, Republicans, WASPs, big business, organized religion, conventional marriage, and conventional recorded history. Not that they have not made good money publishing many of the same people they sneer at so self-righteously: Rush Limbaugh, Tom Clancy, and Stephen King may be hateful people, the feeling goes, but they certainly do pay for publishing folks to eat at expensive bistros. High life in the "liver of the beast," as the 1960's radicals used to say, and how about just a smidgen more lime in that margarita: more fun than Charlie Parker even could have imagined.

One gets the impression from watching publishers that their true mission, rather than marketing books to the general public, is to please each and every special-interest tribalist, anyone who does not like the status quo as he defines it, and every desperate soul in need of the latest bogus diet-fad book, self-help book, or save-the-pandas-and-you-too alternative lifestyle book. The sales of trade books may have gone through the roof in recent years, but it would be difficult to make a rational case that the industry itself is not a wreck, floundering desperately in search of stability. When one reflects that many insiders reserve some of their most colorful liberal-arts vocabulary for the bitter denunciation of the bookstore chains who have made it possible for publishers to achieve a measure of success almost in spite of themselves, one realizes what a strange, self-destructive hothouse of goofiness the industry has become.

There are many reasons, and many questions: How does an industry that damages its own credibility by ferociously defending—and paying huge sums to publish—dodgy characters like Kelly Flinn, Anita Hill, Donald Trump, and Dennis Rodman presume to pass itself off as a font of eternal wisdom? Did it occur to anyone that, even with the outlandish hysteria over the trial of O.J. Simpson, the payment of $3 million to Paula Barbieri for *her* gratuitous viewpoint was not exactly a top-flight idea? That Shaquille O'Neal may be a nice man but has nothing to say to justify an advance of $2 million? Coherent answers to such crafty publishing decisions are not easy to come by, but a milieu whose prominent *philosophes* include self-absorbed show-offs like Norman Mailer, Erica Jong, Jamaica Kincaid, and Harry Evans could stand a collective refresher course on what is reality and what isn't. Thus several years ago, when Mailer denounced a campaign to remove graffiti as a sign of impending fascism, the book-business elites wagged their tails in delight; when Kincaid huffed that she wanted Newt Gingrich to have died instead of legal finagler William Kunstler, muzzles all around the industry grew moist with admiration; and when Jong wailed that she knew for a fact that Republicans were plotting to take away a woman's right to vote, there were those in the ranks who seemed ready to wet the carpet in approval. Clearly publishing wisdom would prevail, set the record straight, and get even with those meanies in the general public to boot.

More recently, even normally clearheaded industry veterans like Tom McCormack have gotten into the act, extolling the virtues of independent and regional publishers with shaky finances and little access to the national review media, while suggesting the grand benefits of even higher returns and lower royalty and commission rates—comments sure to give writers, mainstream publishers, and agents terminal agita. It is tempting, though, to suspect that McCormack, long a prominent industry contrarian but one of the shrewdest men ever to occupy a corner office, may be indulging his own fondness for the put-on, much as Charlie Parker did all those years ago. The danger in this droll little game is that other book folks might think that herein lies a surefire, painless, and—to use Oliver North's term—*neat* plan to turn things around.

The thought of this is enough to make a sober man wince and a tippler pass out altogether, for publishers, leaving aside questions of individual taste or their nearly hallucinogenic delusions about the CIA, the National Rifle Association, and Ralph Reed, have been leaving their basic business sense at the coat-check for some time now. If it is true, as columnist Earl Wilson once said, that "experience is the word we use when we recognize the same mistake twice," then this is an exceptionally experienced field indeed, where clever headstrong people make the same mistakes 10, 20, 50 times and preen about it to their buddies over cocktails.

Many of the zanier ideas have now become so ingrained that publishers are almost proud of them, passing them off as house innovations or updated industry tradition. Thus the fact that it now takes weeks, even months, for a publisher to consider a 300-page novel or a 15-page proposal is presented as normal business policy. One leading house tells callers that a final decision will require four months. Bad news, perhaps, for anxious writers, but very good news in that it will not be publishers charged with responding to a nuclear crisis or a germ-warfare incident. More than likely, a publisher's considered response to such horrors would be a measured, dignified call for "study, patience, and understanding."

In basketball, this approach would be seen as a classic stall, an endless choreographed dance of passing and dribbling to eat up huge amounts of time on the clock with nothing to look forward to but a final score of something like nine to seven or, worse still, nine to nine, an overtime period, and more passing, dribbling, and indecision. The inherent sloth and cowardice of today's decision-making involves endless meetings and a shadowy and often spurious network of second and third, even fourth and fifth, "readers," all to disguise the fact that no one dares make a final determination without a regiment of cronies to take the plunge, and perhaps later the fall, *en masse*. Everybody's a critic these days, as some wag once said.

In 1971, Cass Canfield wrote in his memoirs that Harper's rejection of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* due to a negative reader's report was such a disastrous mistake that it taught him "to read a manuscript myself when there is the slightest question about its merit." Many editors and other publishing people act today as if this were some antediluvian notion akin to using a slingshot to bring down wild game. They frequently give the impression that they have not read much of anything. Instead, they natter endlessly about the film screenings and con-

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certs they have attended, parties they have been to, bars and restaurants they have discovered. They also talk about how hard they work and how serious they are about books. Yet what remains of the industry's badly damaged editorial process still produces delusional books suggesting that Columbus was a genocidal maniac or that Goebbels was just a regular guy, passes off grotesque novels like *American Psycho* as the natural outgrowth of Reaganism, and promotes fiction by illiterate youngsters writing inner-city ghetto English as a sign of emerging genius. On the other hand, respectable midlist books—in other words, those not destined for best-seller status, so the thinking goes—are in trouble, and the reason usually given by the industry wizards is that the markets for them are too difficult to pinpoint.

Ah, those crack editorial and marketing decisions! The logic that suggests a new literary novel will "find its own audience," like an expert tracking dog snuffling through the underbrush, is enough to make a person cringe until one reflects that the majority of books published today get little or no promotional support whatever. A browse through publishers' catalogues will turn up numerous references to "National Promotion" but more often than not that means radio interviews in Tacoma and Indianapolis and a "Meet the Author" appearance that draws 16 yawning locals to a high-school auditorium in Lima, Ohio. Publishers have a very bad tendency to copy each others' successes, failures, and techniques, so for a decade now the marketable fiction of choice has been legal thrillers and novels about serial killers, all marketed in the same hackneyed fashion, while anything different is regarded with extreme suspicion. The thinking, ideas, and organization that people in the advertising business call a "campaign" are usually absent altogether, although publishers do exhibit considerable talent in inventing, defining, and then smothering entire markets through the simple proclamation that no readers exist in those areas. Thus men don't read, conservatives don't read, and Christians don't want anyone *else* to read. Books on foreign policy, music, history, and domestic policy don't sell; first novels and, now, second novels don't sell; poetry, translated works, horror novels, short stories don't sell. Publishers have convinced themselves that this kind of thinking is what passes for market research, and have thus reduced the list of safe, blame-free publishing ventures to novels by Stephen King, Dean Koontz, Tom Clancy, and Danielle Steel, books on the Kennedy family, and books by celebrities.

It is a relief, though, that all this research has shown that there do exist ample audiences to justify payment of $2 million to foot-fetishist Dick Morris, $5 million for a book on the obese Marlon Brando, $6 million to erratic foul-mouth Whoopie Goldberg, and reportedly $3 million for the ruminations of Goldie Hawn, if she has any. Industry luminary Harry Evans recently made the peculiar comment that publishers were "too interested in money," but it might be more accurate to say that they are not interested enough. It is an editor's job to acquire book projects, but today's attitude seems to be, "Sure, I bought that bridge, but it was the company's money. *Cool*!"

It would be a gross understatement to describe some of the people in the business today as star-struck; rather the vast majority of them seem absolutely desperate to glad-hand any stray celebrity they can find, hand over enormous sums of money, and then tell all who listen that they must rush to the airport, off to "edit" the new manuscript by one of the greats of politics or culture, gently to break the news to Loni Anderson, Joan Baez, and Pamela Anderson (or whatever name she is using this month) that Chapter 15 of their memoirs needs a little work. It is certain that, even now, there are editors in hot pursuit of Bill Clinton's memoirs, determined to golf with the First Bubba and ensure that the American public will enjoy its "right to know" about the great man's programs, although perhaps not about how he has worked vigorously to exaggerate and heighten racial tensions, subvert our military and national defense, and antagonize our allies. More to the point, perhaps at his side they will get to attend those Renaissance Weekends at long last.

> The sales of trade books may have gone through the roof in recent years, but it would be difficult to make a rational case that the industry itself is not a wreck, floundering desperately in search of stability.

One of today's peculiarities is that book publishing seems composed in roughly equal parts of unregenerate ignoramuses, decent well-meaning professionals, and others of little conviction who go along merely to get along. One joke has it that the dummies acquire the books, hand them to the pros to edit, and demand that all the others keep their mouths shut during editorial and sales meetings. Not content with this arrangement, though, the business slogs doggedly ahead, serene in its more modern, politically correct, and technologically hip identity, and now seems bent on re-inventing itself even more fully by welcoming into its bosom a motley collection of retreads from other areas of media, from newspapers, television, and rock magazines. The idea, as actually stated publicly by various exuberant industry spokesmen, is to smooth the way to that elusive synergy whereby a book morphs easily into a movie, an audio tape, a CD-ROM, perhaps even a Beanie Baby. Should these new recruits be successful, it may become dangerous for legitimate book-folks, for soon other strangers will appear in publishing: bassoonists, stewardesses, organic-food gurus, all with titles like "Editorial Director" or "Associate Publisher," every one of them bubbling over with enthusiasm for literature, devotion to free speech, and commitment to the grand principle that "we must all learn to love one another or die."

Whether these and other newcomers will be able to erase the recent stains of a $160 million royalty accounting fiasco at one major house, or the cancellation of more than 100 book contracts by another, is dubious. The latter ruckus is truly a damaging blow to literature, since such intriguing projects as a book of Jell-O recipes and a collection of stories about celebrities and their pets may never see the light of day. We should not forget that Jell-O has always been something of a sacred icon in Amer-

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ica, and there are legions of readers eager to find out whether Katie Couric really has a wolverine, or how Johnny Depp amassed that extraordinary collection of Woolworth turtles. Not only that, but does Kate Moss know about this and what does she think? What we have here are the publishing equivalents of what Alan King, commenting years ago about Gerald Ford's public clumsiness, called "sight gags."

These newcomers to publishing have already been praised as vastly intelligent, but this is pretty standard, because judging from the hullabaloo of compliments whenever book people meet face to face, everyone in the industry is simply brilliant, with IQs that would have dazzled Einstein. When backs are turned the mood sours, of course, and the giddy bonhomie changes to snickers about the last overpriced celebrity book that did not sell, the political memoirist picked up on morals charges, the ballyhooed new novelist who took heavy critical gas and heavier returns. With such a dense fog of *schadenfreude* hanging over the book scene these days, it is fortunate that there are still laws against carrying concealed weapons, at least in New York's Waldorf-Astoria. To be truthful, all this is not quite as showy as Mailer and Vidal trying to punch each other silly in front of witnesses, but an industry in trouble cannot always bring in the best entertainers, and Robert Downey, Jr., and Geraldine Ferraro have their own problems these days.

With such disorder on all sides, there are the inevitable publishing panels, rogues' galleries of industry seers wringing their hands over the latest outrages, and then rushing back to their offices to initiate further buffoonery. One inevitable question is: What's to be done? Sad to say, the typical answer of too many of the elites, secure in their belief that no one can blame them for the ongoing mess, would probably be: About what? Regrettably, many insiders carry with them everywhere, like some unpronounceable blood disorder or tropical fungus that will not go away, the unhealthy misconception that everything is normal, that the world of book publishing has been a bizarre place for years, has survived and even prospered, and that this is the industry's natural state.

Signs of hope can be detected, though, in a recent article in *Publishers Weekly* about several promising young editors from a variety of trade publishers both large and small. All under 40 years of age, they profess devotion to their craft and talk sensibly about all the right things: their impatience with delays, their interest in new and offbeat ideas, the need to draw in readers younger than 40, their willingness to look for new writers in unexpected places, their feeling that the concept of book promotion needs to be completely overhauled. If they, and others like them, are sincere, it is none too soon, for the book business badly needs clearheaded reinforcements at this point.

Yet they will be struggling against the accumulated foolishness of the past 25 years. They will need to bear in mind that a book must first exist as a book. Publishers deal in the printed word, and each sentence, paragraph, and chapter must be as well-tailored as possible; if their project is one of the tiny number that is turned later on into a movie—even one starring Pauly Shore—then so much the better. But in publishing, it is the reviews that matter and not the newsreels. There is, of course, the danger that even now one of these well-meaning young professionals may be preparing a deal memo for a Hideki Irabu book, or angling to purchase the memoirs of Tab Hunter, Troy Donahue, or Rory Calhoun, lured by the mystery behind the great star's fall from grace—as if our having to read about Holly Near wasn't bad enough.

Above all else, they should consider the huge potential audience for good books out in what used to be called the American Heartland—and further reflect that this type of reader is not likely to look kindly on frothing anti-American bad-asses, who no longer seem as cute and allegedly principled as they did back in 1972. If anything, time has shown the rest of us that most of the grand causes of those years were daffy and even destructive, the black-footed ferret is alive and well and living in Wyoming, and today the word is that even Eldridge Cleaver enjoys a good strawberry daiquiri now and then.

Some years ago, Irving Howe made a point about the type of argument that is clever, persuasive, and articulately framed. His comment was: "But is it true?" If anything has gotten the book business into trouble in recent years it has been the tendency to pay heavy money to frauds making absurd claims that only certain publishing elites, Ramsey Clark, or the English Department at Duke University could ever take seriously. If these young editors are really serious they will dial 911 immediately when confronted by someone asking for large sums of money for the purported memoirs of Jimmy Stewart's transvestite lover, or for a tell-all book about how *El Niño* is really an FBI sting operation gone amok.

The story goes that Freud once said that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. If he were observing what goes on in the book business today, he might add, "You're not out of the woods yet." C

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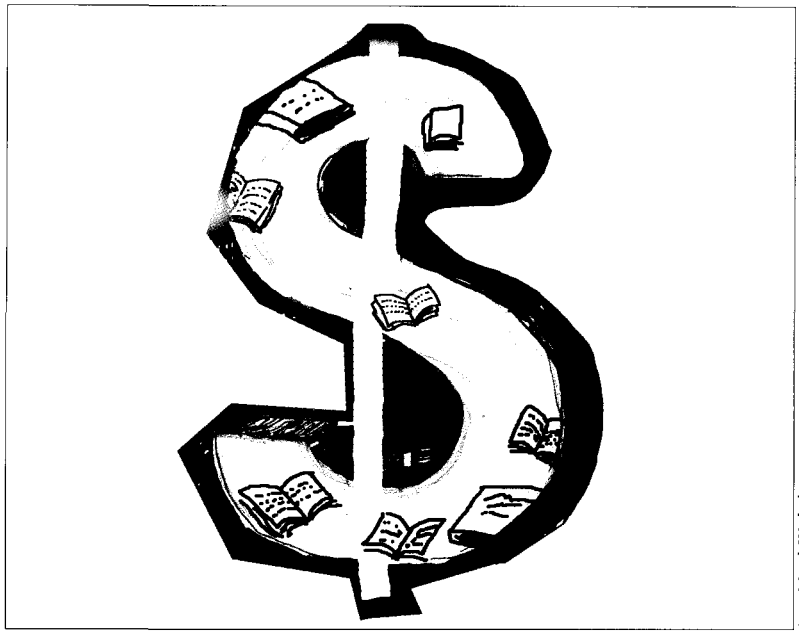
Maxwell Perkins Is Dead

The Decline of Commercial Publishing

by Clay Reynolds



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

In an industry that trades on rumors of disaster, the tales flying around New York (which I use here as a synecdoche for major publishing houses anywhere) for the past several years are horrendous. Though some of the horror stories may be exaggerated, at least insofar as the specific publishers involved are concerned, they are often not that far from the truth. Most publishers have enormous backlogs, and some books that have been in galleys since last summer have not yet been scheduled, may not be scheduled until next fall, may not be published for two or three years. Some of them might not be published at all. Recent contract cancellations, even of books in galleys, even of finished books, suggest that a book may not actually "be" a book until it walks out of a bookstore under a buyer's arm.

Moreover, rising paper costs, shrinking consumer demand, and the decline in independent bookstores are also putting the squeeze on the entire book business; and the situation is not likely to improve as more and more people turn to electronic media for their reading matter.

Because of all this, publishers are increasingly careful about what they buy, and they watch what they own with a strict eye. This eye, many writers would attest, is in the center of a publisher's forehead. Their regular vision, of course, never leaves the profit and loss spread sheets, and their ears are attuned for rumblings from the accounting department, while their necks are craning around to see who is gaining on them and how fast.

When writers gather, though, they admit that fewer and fewer publishers are buying books these days. As mega-chains continue to grow with the rapidity of Taco Bells across the country, "Mom and Pop" book-selling operations are being systematically squeezed out. The manager of one of the oldest independents in San Antonio, the Twigg, told me last July that she is probably going to have to close by this spring. None of the large publishers' reps will call on her any longer; some have taken her off their catalogue mailing lists. She cannot rely on the national distributors, since they require minimum orders that would too severely tax her space. Even if she special orders a book, her store is given a low priority, meaning that a customer can expect a two-week wait for a current title.

Even well-heeled local or regional chains are pulling in their horns, closing stores, regrouping in the face of barracuda-like competition from mega-corporations which increasingly control the retail end of the book business. The demise of Taylor Books in Dallas a few years ago marked the end of a store that was practically an institution, one that supported local authors and brought in national figures for special signings and lectures. But such stores cannot compete with the volume discounts and flashy marketing techniques of the mega-chains which sprout like weeds in the strip centers along urban byways.

It would seem that such growth in massive stores with huge inventories would indicate an upsurge in the number of books being sold, but this is not the case. The mega-stores seem to put their emphasis on providing atmosphere, ambiance, a place to hang out, to talk about writing or books, not to buy. They stage readings and lectures, all of which benefit writers to some extent, but which are really designed to make the sponsoring stores the center of the book world in their communities. But they do not sell many books. Some, according to their managers, make more money from CD sales and even computer software and video sales and rentals than they do from newly published volumes; magazine sales constitute a huge part of

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Clay Reynolds' most recent books are Players, *a novel, and* Twenty Questions: Answers for the Inquiring Writer.

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their daily sales figures; some, one Fort Worth Borders manager confessed, make more money on coffee and pastry sales than they do on books. A manager for a San Antonio Barnes & Noble outlet told me that they sell more copies of book review publications than actual books. "Of course," she noted, "periodicals are considerably cheaper than books, and for most readers, knowing about a book is as good as having read it."

Astute consumers just do not buy many books, at least not at retail prices. And why should they? Super discount stores, used book stores, book clubs, and even some supermarkets offer the same best-sellers for a substantial discount off even the megastores' reduced rates. Only a fool would plunk down $25 for the same novel that Wal-Mart or K-Mart will sell for $14.99. And if the book is any good, canny readers know that the paperback version will be out soon.

In the past ten years, commercial publishing has changed, and the changes have been quick and dynamic. To state the problem frankly and honestly, most publishers do not want good books. That is, they do not want books that have been carefully and artfully crafted; which tell a good story; which present stunning characters; which amuse, scintillate, inspire, enthrall; which are, in other words, "literary." They want books that sell. And for big bucks. If a book has sales potential and still maintains all those qualities, fine. But unless it promises quick and substantial profit, its innate qualities are of no particular importance and have no appeal to a commercial publisher.

As recently as ten or 12 years ago, when a writer started out with his first book, he would most likely have an editor who had built his reputation on finding new authors, then developing them. They did not make a lot of money for the first two, three, or four books, but they made enough to keep writing. The idea was that the fifth or sixth book would be a "breakout," and the writers would make decent, maybe even big money, maybe win a few prizes, maybe get movie deals, maybe hit the best-seller list a time or two. Then the writers would be in the publisher's stable, would be loyal to the editor who "discovered" them, and over a few decades, would develop a reputation and a readership that would benefit everyone.

Such a system worked, and it made sense. Many writers gradually became major names, "household words," "name brands" over the years. Names like Robert Ludlum, Elmore Leonard, Stephen King, Dean Koontz come to mind. This was what was called being "in the process." It might take three, four, even five books, but writers could expect that their day would come. The editor would carry them over the rough times, ignore smallish sales figures and gross returns, groom them for "breakout," and all would be well sooner or later, preferably sooner.

After 25 years with the same publisher, though, one editor of this sort left to take a senior position with another company, which was a wholly owned but totally autonomous corporation belonging to a "mega-house." This was the editorial equivalent of a "breakout." Now, he could control not a few but a whole company of writers. He was ready to count coup. He eventually brought a half-dozen or so young (in the business) writers with him, began developing them in the same way he always had, and figured that within ten years he could have the best house in New York. But things changed, and the change was abrupt and unforeseen.

The company in question was, as I say, a wholly owned subsidiary of another publisher, which was itself sold to a non-publishing entity, which employed a whole raft of MBAs whose jobs were to do nothing but figure profit and loss. Some of them actually read books, but none seemed to care very much about them. What they cared about was reading spread sheets. After two years, the books this editor was publishing were not showing profit, at least not enough profit, and the MBAs' quarterly reports were not good enough. The editor was fired.

According to the story, a young corporate assistant vice president from the parent company got off the elevator one Wednesday afternoon and "fired everyone in sight." He fired the secretaries and the maid. He even tried to fire a messenger boy from a private mail service. Twenty-five editors got the ax that afternoon, and the publishing house, for all intents and purposes, was closed. One writer who was under contract for the company said that when he called, all he got was an answering machine. "You could hear the wind howling down the empty halls behind the voice," he said.

Two weeks later, the parent company reopened the subsidiary, but only as an imprint house attached to the parent. (According to another rumor, the VP who did the firing and shut down the house forgot that this was one of the oldest publishers in New York; he himself was fired the following week.) A corporate vice president was put in charge. She probably had never edited a soul, or at least no successful soul, but she had absolute control over how things would be done. And they were done according to the most vicious enemy of writers, "market surveys." Corporate suits took over the book business. In a few years, she herself was fired when she "lost" a major "name brand."

The new rules are simple: if a book, any book, does not turn significant sales numbers, the writer is gone. Even a first book has to "pay out," earn back its advance, or the writer's second book probably will not be published. Gone are reasonable advances, generous deadlines, and any sense of responsibility on the part of the publisher for the book's success. A new and insidious clause has also appeared in contract boiler plates, allowing the publisher an effective "quit claim." If a contracted book for any reason fails to meet expectations, a publisher simply does not have to accept it. Moreover, the writer may now be liable for any advance against royalty paid on the contract's signing. Scary business, that. But writers have no choice. It is sign or walk away to another house which will have the same rules.

Rule two applies to the editorial staff. They are not to buy any book that fails to fit into a standard genre category or to have "blockbuster" potential. The latter class applies particularly to books by celebrities and other famous people. "Literary fiction" has become the dirtiest word in New York.

At the same time, over the past decade, there has been a serious industry-wide downsizing, a bloodletting starting sometime in 1989 and really never stopping. The result of this massive shakeup was that editorial numbers in New York were cut by as much as 33 percent (some sources said it was more like 45 percent). And salaries for lower echelon editorial staff—never high in the first place—were scaled back as well. Thus, today, almost every editor in New York is doing the work that three to five editors were carrying five years ago; many experienced and book-loving individuals who were editors five years ago have left the industry. Some have become agents or independent book doctors. The result has been a decline in editorial integrity, both from the standpoint of acquisition and from the standpoint of quality work.

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The pressure for demonstrable and quick success mounted along with the workload. The typical editor now has about 20 books on his desk at one time, all on serious deadline, and each comes with a profit and loss forecast sheet that says exactly what numbers that book has to turn to pay out. If it fails, the writer is gone. If too many of them fail, then the editor is gone. Profit drives the industry, and potential profit determines what will and will not be published.

At the same time, and illogically, the very houses that are squeezing staff and demanding measurable success from every writer's work will pay millions of dollars for a book by a political figure, movie star, celebrity athlete, convicted criminal, or accused felon, even when the named author was no closer to the actual manuscript than most of them have been to an actual book since they left school. Ghostwriters, slaving away for a fraction of a percent of what the supposed authors are getting, are hard at work for a decimal point of what they might have made writing their own books a decade ago. The supposed authors are raking in the big bucks, and so are the publishing houses. In the meantime, they are quibbling over a few grand paid out to a new writer who is a few months late on a deadline, or whose work might require some editing or management in order to find a place on the publisher's list. A big loser in all this, typically, is the writer. A bigger loser is the reader. And possibly the biggest losers are the formerly idealistic young people who became editors, who are now reduced to a collection of brown-nosing company cogs, fiercely loyal to policy, no longer able to take any pride whatsoever in their product. As one editor lamented to me, "Nobody edits books anymore. We just catalogue them, manage them, and shove them to copyed-it for processing."

One timely result of all this is a demand for categories. Every book now has to "fit" some surefire category on the publisher's list. Let's say Editor Al gets a novel he really likes by Author Ray. He takes the manuscript upstairs to the corporate VP, who is functioning as editor-in-chief. Instead of looking at the book, she asks, "What kind of book is it?" Editor Al says, "Well, it's about this young boy and this old man . . . " She interrupts. "No! I mean what kind of book is it? Have you seen our list?" Of course he has. "We have crime, mystery, thriller, romance, adventure, horror, Western, children's, juvenile, and science fiction. Which of these categories would it go under?" He shakes his head. "None of them. It's kind of literary." She shakes her head. "Best-seller?" Al admits that it has potential, but no iron-clad guarantee. "Then we don't want it," she says. "Get back to your desk and quit fooling around." End of consideration.

To put it another way, the midlist is dead, and literary fiction is on life support. But this isn't news, either. Look what happened to poetry. In 1950, almost every one of the 23 "major" New York houses had a "poetry list." Today, only three or four houses in New York publish any original poetry at all except in their textbook divisions. They regard poetry as a "loss leader," something they publish in order to reduce their corporate profits and taxes and maybe snag a Pulitzer Prize in the process. Alarmingly, some houses, faced with horrendous competition in category fiction, have dropped fiction altogether. There are nasty stories of "payola" floating around, too, stories of editors paying to have some titles placed on regional best-seller lists, anything to keep their numbers up, their jobs intact. In sum, the machine has to keep running, keep churning out product, for that is what generates the profit that drives the industry.

The irony is that the quality of editorial work is diminishing as well. The average editor in New York starts out at about $25,000 a year, or less. And he is living in Manhattan or a nearby borough, where a one-room apartment in a dangerous neighborhood can go for a grand a month, plus utilities. This is less money than a public school teacher can make. (Yet applicants for editorial positions are standing three deep at any employment office in New York. Go figure.)

In exchange for this princely sum, the editor is asked to put in close to 80 hours a week. Advancement is possible if a best-seller emerges; but by and large, editors work in a sweatshop environment with little hope of anything good coming their way from the companies they work for. Moreover, because of these conditions, the quality of aspiring editors is declining. One has only to look through a few published novels on any bookstore's "recent release" rack to discover that major errors in grammar, fact, style, structure, and even chronology and logic occur with regularity. To put it another way, and to quote a dozen New York agents, "No one knows how to edit anymore. Maxwell Perkins is dead."

So is loyalty. Turnover is at an all-time high, and it is not unusual for a writer to discover that his new publisher has assigned him to the same editor he abandoned at a previous house, or to that editor's assistant.

So what does this mean for the writers out there who have manuscripts in progress or even already making the rejection

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—*from "Paperback Best Sellers,"*
New York Times Book Review *(January 11, 1998)*

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rounds of editors and agents? It means each of them must learn to write for category, to figure out what's hot, and to deliver it promptly before the category cools. They must forget about writing *well* and learn to write *popular*. They must abandon any notions they ever had about merely telling a good story with interesting characters or even writing what they want. They should be studying what's in the top ten and trying to imitate it. Additionally, they must be more careful than ever of grammar, style, organization, construction, and all the other elements that editors used to take care of after a book was delivered. If it is wrong in manuscript, it will be wrong in the galleys, and it will be wrong in the publication, and reviewers will fall on it with the bloody enthusiasm of feral dogs. Craft is everything today; art don't count.

Sure, there are always exceptions, and it is great to believe that hard work, perseverance, and a dedicated belief in the quality of one's own work will pay off, that literary attention will succeed, and that quality will triumph over machine-stamped trash. But the bottom line is that the state of American publishing is not going to improve any time soon; in fact, it will probably get worse. The Nancy Taylor Rosenbergs and Mary Higgins Clarks will inherit the earth, or at least the big contracts, and the W.P. Kinsellas and Winston Grooms will find comfortable university presses to publish their work. Meanwhile, the whoever elses out there will continue to scrap around for a low five figures and be damned glad to have it. Anyone who tries to sell a book based on literary quality, not on marketability and category appeal, will have trouble, will most likely fail.

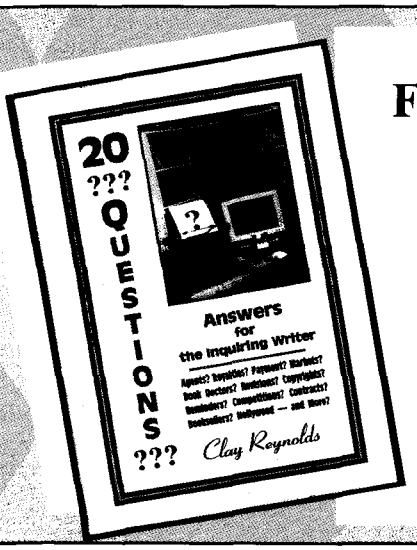
One woman tried to argue this point with me at a talk I gave recently. She kept telling me I was all wet in my characterization of the publishing industry as being only interested in commercially viable properties, that literature was still king. I then asked her to name three major literary novels, by Americans, published in the past five years. She said "Salman Rushdie." I said, "He's not American." She said, "Umberto Eco." I said, "He's not American." And so it went. Remember, it was Norman Mailer, one of our most prominent literary figures, who supposedly said that in America, a "writer can make a killing, but not a living."

If a writer is European, Asian, or Oriental (without the hyphenated American behind it), there is a chance of success, but if you are an American writer, get back. Even black and Hispanic writers are feeling the pinch. And distaff writers, while popular at the moment, will probably fade as well. Editors will aver that women buy more books than men, but women reading women has never been a reliable trend according to long-range "market surveys."

Most of the few American literary writers who are still producing regularly find that they must bolster their income by aligning themselves with special interest groups (feminist, gay, environmental, etc.). Most receive comparatively modest advances, must be highly prolific, and supplement their incomes by teaching in universities or consulting for institutes and television networks. The big money losers in the past half decade include a veritable Who's Who of "major contemporary American writers" who have failed to put up impressive numbers. Some "great American authors" cannot even get contracts, though their names are virtual icons among those who worship the contemporary American literary pantheon.

It is simply getting harder and harder even to get in, to stay in, and to make money once you are in. As I said, almost every contract issued now has an "escape clause" in it, an effective "quit claim" that puts the responsibility for a book's success on the writer's shoulders, even if the publisher fails to promote it. An editor told me, "They're turning us into a low-rent Hollywood. We're supposed to make 'B' movies and sell each one like it's *Gone With the Wind*, even though we get zip for distribution, promotion, or advertising." Another editor said that it is worse than that: "More thought goes into a pilot for a TV commercial than effort goes into editing a new book."

So why bother writing at all? Why not just get into a warm tub and open up a fat vein rather than slave away writing a book probably no one will want? The results of the former action will not be particularly stimulating, but at least there is a finite sense of purpose about it. The answer is that writing is still—in spite of the narrow-minded, profit-mongering, myopic and frightened editors' and publishers' demands—an art, an impulse, one of the oldest forms of human expression. At the moment the philistines are in charge of the temple, the money-changers in charge of what will or will not be seen and read; but most of us who continue to assault it with our best work keep hoping that somehow, somewhere, there will be a breakthrough, a sudden awareness that quality, care, and talent are more valuable than crass imitation or the quick buck.



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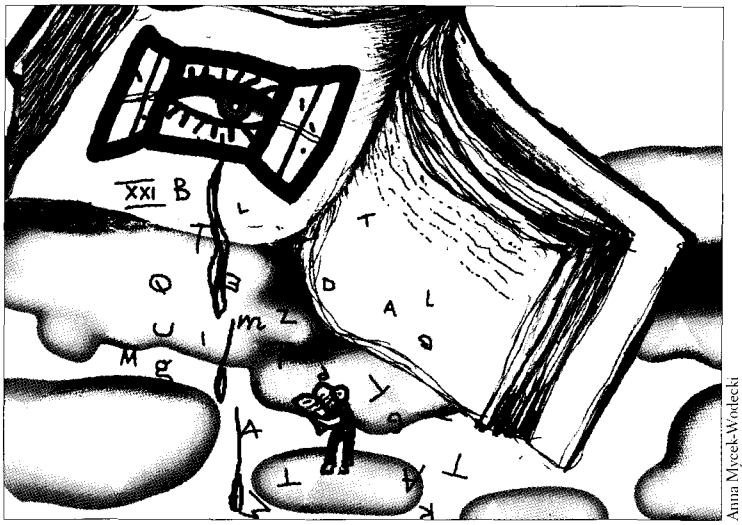
Reading and Weeping

by George Garrett

"If Stephen King, John Grisham, and Michael Crichton got together, they'd become one of the top three publishers overnight."
—Morgan Entrekin, quoted in *The New Yorker*



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Tony Outhwaite's article pretty much says it all, a whole lot of it anyway, about the present state of American publishing. And he's not only right on the money, he's seriously funny, which is a pleasure for the reader and a problem for the writer who comes along afterwards and whose last best hope and bet is to play the slow-witted straight man.

Still, there are a few things to be said to complement Outhwaite. Over the past year or so the tactical and strategic battles in publishing have been extensively covered, if only in bits and pieces, by the *New York Times*, *New York Times Book Review*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Wall Street Journal*, the *Nation*, even *Time* and *Newsweek*, and, of course, the sassy and arrogantly irreverent *New York Observer*. Which is only to say the problem has been on some people's minds and agendas. Out of all this mostly self-conscious and often self-serving coverage have come (in my opinion) three important articles: Outhwaite's, without question; Ken Auletta's "The Publishing World: The Impossible Business" (*The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997), which—if firmly establishment in its point of view—nevertheless does offer the significant numbers, some pertinent interviews, and some thoughtful general judgment; and the essay that precedes mine in this forum by Texas novelist and teacher Clay Reynolds, a version of which appeared in the Spring/Summer 1997 issue of the *Texas Review*.

Together with the Reynolds article, the *Texas Review* published 14 "responses" to it, written by writers, agents, and people in publishing. Reynolds' basic position closely shadows that of Outhwaite. Put simply: publishing has changed, and it's changed quickly and dynamically. The business is no longer what it was, even ten years ago. Not to put too fine a point on it, but to state the problem frankly and honestly, most publishers don't want good books anymore simply because they're good books. That is, they don't want books that have been carefully and artfully crafted, which tell a good story, which present stunning characters, which amuse, scintillate, inspire, enthrall, which are, in other words, "literary." They want books that sell. And for big bucks. The responses to Reynolds' article varied according to point of view. I am going to cannibalize my own and use it as a response to both Reynolds and Outhwaite.

If, as everything indicates, many of the problems in contemporary publishing come from the attempt to make that old-fashioned business fit in with present corporate conglomerate, and globalized, practices, including the drive for unlikely, even outrageous profits, there are other equally important forces at work. Outhwaite makes the point that the people in publishing, lots of them anyway, are simply not of the quality and character of those editors and publishers who dominated and shaped the business a couple of generations ago. It's a strong point. I would modify it only slightly: Today's editors make people like Maxwell Perkins and Bennett Cerf and Alfred Knopf and Horace Liveright look good, better than they ought to. These old-timers, in truth, share a heavy weight of responsibility for what has become of their stock-in-trade. Some others that he mentions—Hiram Haydn, Cass Canfield, Ken McCormick (and I would add Cork Smith and Samuel Vaughan)—were admirable and honorable professionals. But their decency and relative innocence rendered them virtually impotent against the worst trends in American publishing and the worst kinds of people who were rapidly coming to power in publishing just as in so many other areas of our troubled society.

George Garrett is the Henry Hoyns Professor of English at the University of Virginia. His most recent book is Days of Our Lives Lie in Fragments, New and Old Poems 1957-1997 *(Louisiana State University Press).*

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The problem is, then, larger than it seems, with more villains than we may wish to recognize. (Fear of being labeled as paranoid has left us easily vulnerable to all kinds of villainy.) Publishing is only part of the problem. Also deeply involved, responsible for much that is wrong, are other parts of the literary establishment, including the academies and the writers themselves. Since most American "literary" writers are in the academies, for better and worse, there is less distinction here than one might imagine or hope for. The writer is worked on by both the publisher and the academic institutions that, more or less, own him. None of the aspects of the present state of things tends to bring out the best in our writers. For whatever bones may be available, they snarl and fight like feral dogs. In any case, now is not a time conducive to serious questions or to strict examination of the multitude of assumptions and follies at the heart of our lives and our society. Few of our writers dare to do anything more interesting or adventurous than to preach blandly and safely to a shrinking audience of the long-since converted or to say a rosary or two of weary and discredited liberal clichés. Literary writing, at least for the survivors, the status quo, is not a career of danger and daring. Our best and brightest have become "company men," just as in the Soviet Union the writers, with the exceptions of towering figures like Solzhenitsyn and Brodsky, sold their art and their souls for the sake of a mess of potage and a little comfort. Remember what Solzhenitsyn told a graduating class at Harvard—how we in the West don't need any state censors since the intellectual status quo is doing a fine and dandy job, keeping all the serious questions unasked and the most serious problems untouched. For our culpable writers there is no incentive for them to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy, either in literary form or content. There is no good reason to take a stand against what is said to be popular. No wonder that despite superstores (Borders, Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million), with music and coffee bars to delight the unwary and to entice the curious, Americans are voting with their feet, staying as far away as possible from most of what passes for literary art.

Stuck on a desert island (with Cindy Crawford?) or given a choice, who wouldn't much rather read the latest Elmore Leonard rather than the brand new DeLillo? Once years and years ago I heard a bright New York editor (alas no longer whinnying with us) ask William Faulkner if he could be so bold as to send Faulkner a new book by a wonderful new writer. Using his pipe for pauses and punctuation, Faulkner allowed that he certainly had no objection to receiving such a book in the mail, but that he doubted very much he would be able to read it. "These days," he said, "I only have time for the old verities." These days the old verities are going out of print and being dropped from the curriculum of "institutions of higher learning." But we still have some libraries, and a book with more or less acid-free paper will last maybe 500 years, at least ten times as long as any known form of electronic information yet invented or envisioned.

Summing up 1997 in "A Feast of Literary Delights" (*Newsweek*, January 5, 1998), reviewers Malcolm Jones, Jr., and Ray Sawhill compared and contrasted the current literary scene with what they viewed as the high point of the 1960's. ("Writers in the mid-60s stood at the red-hot center of things.") They argued, "Writers today dwell in an uneasy shadowland somewhere between the Wax museum and the midway." Nevertheless, after allowing for some of the unpleasant and undeniable facts—a string of huge celebrity advances that did not earn out; declining sales and profits overall; the losing battle of the independent bookstores fighting against the big chain stores and superstores; the extraordinary percentage of returns, often 50 percent or more—these reporters tried to end on an upbeat note, citing the successes of some of the smaller presses, the (possibly) salutary impact, strange as it may seem, of Oprah's Book Club, and, exemplary of "the best season, critically and commercially in years," the attention and success earned by three literary novels—Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* (Atlantic Monthly Press), Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* (Holt), and Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (Scribner's). Their conclusion: "It is hard to despair of American publishing in a year when three such distinguished and challenging novels not only appear on bestseller lists but, in the case of *Cold Mountain*, sell well over a million copies."

What the men from *Newsweek* do not mention is that all three of these books received massive and very expensive promotion and reams of publicity and that nevertheless *Cold Mountain* was the only one whose commercial results were commensurate with the expense and effort. *Cold Mountain*'s publisher, Morgan Entrekin, devoted much of his promotional attack to bookstores all across the country, *outside* of New York City, proving, with his success, that there are Americans in the provinces who do read books and, at the same time, that New York, though powerfully influential in the business, is really just one region among many others. Chances that any three literary novels in the foreseeable future will enjoy this kind of promotional attention are slim.

The problems of the literary scene are exacerbated by the attitude of many readers who, as in other products and other aspects of our society, haunted by brand names and victimized by the culture of celebrity, depend on publicity, advertising, and book reviews more than their own good judgment and taste. Strangely, the book-reading public, relatively small as it may be, seems to be singularly easy to manipulate. Add to the hustle of publishers the unavoidable truth that so much that is published, fiction and nonfiction alike, does not speak to or about the lives and values of most Americans, and you have a situation that looks unlikely to change for the better any time soon. New technology may help a little bit—depending on the character of the people who control it. Small presses, operating with low overhead and modest goals, may keep the idea of literature alive, if not well, in the future. Right now some of the university presses are doing some good books and picking up where the big commercial houses have failed. But a glance at the university press books advertised in *PMLA* does not inspire hope for the future. Read the catalogue of Stanley Fish's Duke University Press . . . and weep.

Tony Outhwaite tries his level best to finish off his report with some faint prospect of hope in the form of the "promising young editors from a variety of trade publishers." I wish I could share his optimism. I will try, always, however, remembering my University of Virginia student (a victim of TV like all of his generation) who wrote that his favorite American author is "Epcott Fitzgerald." And another one, more typical of the rising generation of non-readers, who wrote that he suffered from "low self of steam." At least these young people will escape unscathed from the ideological clutches of the theoreticians and graduate (probably *cum laude*) as innocent and ignorant as when they arrived and (pardon the expression) matriculated.

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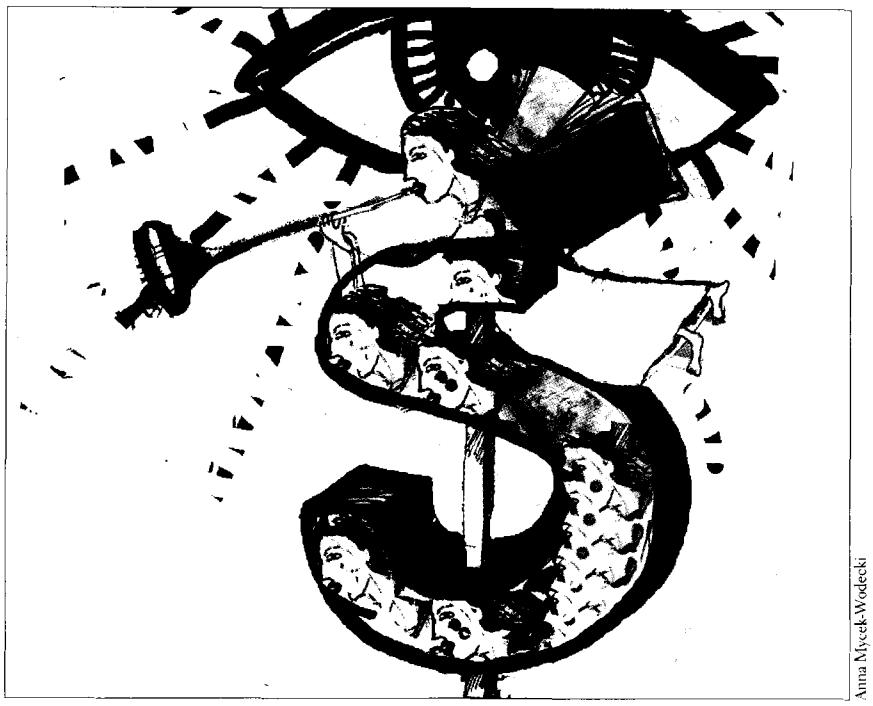
God and Mammon in Christian Publishing

by Gene Edward Veith



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

That one can find Christian bookstores in nearly every shopping mall is doubtless a good sign. While our intellectual and cultural establishments refuse to factor God into their equations, there is an alternative network of publishing houses and bookstores devoted entirely to religion. While millions of ordinary Americans have stopped reading altogether, Christians, particularly conservative Christians, are still reading voraciously.

Though many segments of the publishing industry have been hurting, Christian publishing has been thriving. In only four years, from 1991 to 1994, sales of religious books shot up 92 percent, from 36.7 million to 70.5 million. Nearly seven percent of all books sold are religious. Today, the network of Christian publishers and bookstores, mostly representing evangelical Protestantism, make up a three billion dollar industry.

And yet, Christian thought does not seem to be any more prominent in the marketplace of ideas. Even as its market share increases, the influence of Christianity on American culture continues to shrink. Part of the reason may be that Christians, with their publishing arms, have become something of a subculture, set off and kept separate from the mainstream. To the extent that this has happened, it is not necessarily due to a fundamentalist impulse to separate from the sinful world; rather, conservative Christians have been marginalized against their will by an aggressively secularist media and academic establishment.

But there is another factor in the paradox that while churches are growing, Christianity is declining. If churches are not exercising much influence on the culture, the culture is certainly exercising a great deal of influence on the church. This is evident not only in the mainline liberal denominations, which make a point of aping cultural trends. These liberal churches are in fact declining, having become so indistinguishable from "the world" that few people can find a reason to get up early on Sunday to go to them anymore. Today, it is the evangelical churches that are growing. But ironically, they are now capitulating to the secularist culture. This has nothing to do with the triumph of nonreligious ideas or ideologies, which in fact have never seemed less credible; the new worldliness of evangelicalism is due to the utter victory of free-market capitalism.

The new creed of American religion is commercialism. Today, doctrine and practice are shaped not so much by Scripture and certainly not by tradition, but by marketing research, consumer surveys, and the overarching goal of reaching a mass market by giving the customers what they want. This is stated in so many words in the literature, seminars, and consultant reports of the so-called "church growth movement." The results can be seen in the "mega-churches" now scattered throughout our nation's suburbs, whose architecture and corporate mission statements show them to be enormous spiritual shopping malls.

The emergence of a new pop Christianity—and an explanation of why the values of the free market, inestimable as they are in many other spheres, are not necessarily beneficial for theology—can perhaps best be seen in what has happened to the Christian publishing industry. Christian publishing companies had their beginnings as denominational presses—church-

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Gene Edward Veith, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, is the author of Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture *(Crossway). A version of this article appeared in* World *magazine.*

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es needed to publish Sunday School curricula, Bible study resources, and theological treatises that reflected their own theological distinctiveness. Nondenominational tract societies, college student ministries, and other groups committed to evangelism and the promulgation of the Christian faith also turned to publishing, a fitting medium particularly for the strongly Word-centered emphasis of Protestant evangelicalism. In Michigan, a number of pious laymen of the Reformed persuasion started family businesses devoted to serving Christ through what they published, companies such as William B. Eerdmans, Fleming H. Revell, Baker Book House, and Zondervan.

Many Christian publishers today still retain their denominational identity or missionary purpose. But the balance between mission and business is not always easy to keep. As the Christian publishing industry grew and became more successful, it had to face the iron laws of competition and the need for capital. Its economic success also attracted investors whose sole interest was the bottom line.

In 1969, Sam Moore, who began as a door-to-door Bible salesman, bought Thomas Nelson, the venerable British publisher of the King James Version. To raise capital for the venture, he went public, selling shares of his new company on the stock exchange. Mr. Moore kept the Thomas Nelson name, moved the company to Nashville, and expanded its scope and its sales. An updated translation of the 1611 classic, the New King James Bible, was a hit with the Bible-buying public. Thomas Nelson branched out into fiction, popular scholarship, biographies, and inspirational titles.

Zondervan, a company with deep roots in the Calvinist tradition (which historically has usually distanced itself from the revivalism and emphasis on personal experience that characterizes most American evangelicals) also hit it big with a Bible. The New International Version, a new translation that aspired to both accuracy and readability for modern readers, became a runaway best-seller. Zondervan, too, expanded its list to cover the whole gamut of religious writing, from theological scholarship and Bible-study aids to more popular titles on child-raising and conversion narratives.

Another company, Word Publishers of Dallas, Texas, rode the wave of the charismatic movement of the 1970's with one top-seller after another. Though Word did not have a Bible to publish, it did have the new genre of "Contemporary Christian Music." Word branched off into the recording industry, putting Christian lyrics to a rock 'n' roll beat and launching music superstars of their own to a vast audience of Christian teenagers.

By the 1980's, although a multitude of other publishers were turning out successful titles, Thomas Nelson, Zondervan, and Word had become "the big three" of Christian publishing. Their success made them intriguing targets for secular investors in this age of corporate mergers and takeovers. In 1984, Word was purchased by ABC, the television network (which itself would be purchased by Capital Cities in 1986). In 1988, Zondervan was purchased by the publishing giant HarperCollins, which is part of the media empire of Rupert Murdoch, the Australian mogul whose holdings run from sleazy tabloids to the FOX Television Network. (Yes, Rupert Murdoch owns the copyright to the New International Version of the Bible.)

Then the big three became the big two. In 1992, Thomas Nelson bought Word from Capital Cities for $72 million in cash. (This transaction kept Word from belonging to Disney, which bought Capital Cities in 1996, preventing the irony of Disney-boycotters being published by a Disney conglomerate.) In the terms of the merger, the two companies would retain their separate names and catalogues, but Nelson/Word is now a single corporate entity—owned not by a church, a ministry, or a pious family but by stockholders trading on the New York Stock Exchange.

Now what is wrong with Rupert Murdoch and Wall Street tycoons owning the two biggest Christian publishers? In principle, nothing. In the labyrinthine maze of corporate ownership, a company can still maintain its independence and its principles regardless of who happens to hold its stock. And part of the conservatism that characterizes most evangelical Protestants surely includes a high respect for the free enterprise system, with its entrepreneurship, profit-taking, and networks of private property. Religion, however, is one of the few realms that is not enhanced by commercial considerations. As Christianity's founder observed, no one can serve both God and Mammon at the same time (Luke 16:13).

For one thing, publicly held corporations are not allowed to discriminate on the basis of religion in their hiring. Churches and nonprofit religious groups can, of course, since they have a First Amendment right to promote their religious identities. Practices taken for granted in religious ministries, such as hiring only Christians, much less Christians holding particular religious doctrines, suddenly becomes problematic.

And then there is the pressure to turn a profit. Proclaiming God's Law and spreading the Gospel are never particularly popular—human beings rebel at the notion that they are sinners, and Christ and the message of salvation through His Cross are described in Scripture as scandals and stumbling blocks (1 Corinthians 1:23). The temptation, then, is to make the message more palatable to consumers, something easier to sell.

Not surprisingly, then, conflicts broke out in the Christian publishing industry with their new corporate masters. In 1992, for example, managers at Zondervan led a group of employees in an attempt to buy the company back from HarperCollins and Mr. Murdoch. The goal, according to then-president James Buick, was "to return the direction and control of the company into the Christian community." The employee buyout attempt failed, and HarperCollins solidified its control.

While at first HarperCollins kept a hands-off approach, letting Zondervan operate as it always had, before long the parent company started to interfere. A dictate was handed down that Zondervan must publish more books that sell more and fewer that sell fewer. Academic lines were scrapped. Sales thresholds were established. Zondervan's priorities shifted to the mass-market, to titles that would appeal to the broadest possible audience.

Consider, for example, the autobiography of hamburger mogul Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's. The book, appropriately titled *Well Done!*, is mildly inspirational—in the Horatio Alger sense—but it has no explicitly Christian content. HarperCollins wanted to co-publish the book with Zondervan, and thus it was so. The book had huge promotional tie-ins with the hamburger chain and was featured in nearly every Christian bookstore in the country.

The big two and the scores of smaller publishing companies continued to publish works of theological integrity. But the dynamics of the industry started to change. The church-based and family business publishers had a hard time competing with

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the deep pockets and corporate backing of Zondervan and Nelson/Word. Popular authors developed by the small publishers jumped ship to the big players for multimillion dollar advances, sums unthinkable for the small publishing houses. As a result, the small houses found themselves having to play the same game. They needed celebrity authors and surefire best-sellers to remain competitive. While some publishers—Crossway, Baker, various denominational presses, and others—have managed to hold on to their theological integrity, many have turned to what can only be described as pop Christianity.

Walk into a typical Christian bookstore today. Try to find the books. Knickknacks, CDs, videos, inspirational posters, greeting cards, T-shirts, and related merchandise (what the prophets of old might have assailed as graven images) take up two-thirds of the shelf space, according to industry statistics. Books make up only 28 percent of sales. The relatively few books that are stocked, therefore, need to have high turnover.

Many Christian bookstores only stock the best-sellers. Wholesalers have programs to supply bookstores with titles that promise big sales, offering mass quantities at a big discount. The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy, since the books they provide are the only ones on the shelf for the customers to buy.

The most striking feature of the Christian marketplace is how closely it imitates the trends and fads of its secular counterpart. Whenever a trend emerges in the secular arena, wait six months and a Christianized version will appear in the religious bookstores. Romance novels sell millions—there are now Christian romance novels, which are slightly less steamy with less provocative covers. Horror stories remain big sellers; there is Christian horror. Tom Clancy's high-tech, three-inch thick military thrillers have inspired Christian counterparts, as have John Grisham's legal thrillers (though the original Mr. Clancy and Mr. Grisham are already, by all accounts, Christians). There are Christian diet books and Christian exercise videos, Christian cookbooks and sex manuals. Christian commercialism is even getting on the bandwagon with management books, such as Thomas Nelson's *The Management Methods of Jesus* and *The People Skills of Jesus: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Business*.

Even when it comes to religion, Christian publishing tends to follow, rather than lead, the culture. The New Age movement, interested in angelic "spirit guides," spawned some best-sellers about angels. Christian publishers followed suit with their books on angels. Near death experiences were big for awhile in the secular press, provoking a rash of Christian books on the same subject (sometimes documenting visions of Hell along with those of the "bright light"). Celebrity worship is big in America's pop culture. Thus, ghost-written books by sports stars, entertainers, people in the news, and individuals who are famous for being famous are much-prized by Christian publishers (particularly if they feature a dramatic conversion experience, though this is not necessary anymore). Certain authors acquire big followings, and while many—such as Billy Graham and Chuck Swindoll—may have valuable things to say, the preference for celebrity writers sometimes squeezes out authors who are not already famous.

Self-help is a major category in the secular bookstores, but it has become a specialty of Christian publishers. Here the theological consequences of the new commercialism are especially obvious. Evangelical Protestantism has always stressed God's help—that is to say, His grace—rather than the human being's capacity to help himself. The Bible consists of God's Law—which convicts the reader of the fact that he cannot keep it and is, in fact, a desperate sinner—and of the Gospel of Christ, which promises free forgiveness through Christ's atonement on the cross. Pop Christianity, on the other hand, sees the Bible as a self-help manual, a guide for successful living. God's Law is reduced to practical principles, which are rather easy to follow and which promise a happy middle-class lifestyle. In practice, this often means books that are little more than pop psychology, with an ever-so-thin veneer of religious language. Happiness comes from feeling good about yourself, as in Robert Schuller's *Be (Happy) Attitudes*, or from being assertive, as in Nelson/Word's title *Don't Let Jerks Get the Best of You*. This is a far cry from "take up your cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

More direct doctrinal compromises are sometimes to be found. Word published *Searching for God in America*, based on a PBS series which cited Islam and Buddhism as being equally valid with Christianity as paths to God. Recently, Zondervan caused a firestorm in evangelical circles when it began revising the New International Version of the Bible to give it "gender-inclusive language," which often meant changing the supposedly divinely inspired words of the original Hebrew and Greek to make them more palatable to our politically correct and feminist-chastened ears. When word of the de-gendered NIV—which was already available in England—came out, the uproar was so great that Zondervan and the Bible translators changed their plan, at least for now (though Tyndale's *The Living Bible*, a paraphrase rather than a translation, is also reportedly undergoing the same kind of revision).

Pop Christianity has also manifested itself in whole churches, which, though once conservative, are now eagerly following the culture in their zeal to bring in vast numbers of worshipers. Classic hymns are jettisoned in favor of pop music; time-tested liturgies are thrown out for "user-friendly" worship styles and "entertainment evangelism." Pastors are transforming themselves into CEOs; the members of their congregations are seen as customers, as consumers, to be manipulated by marketing techniques. The ancient faith, which has done so much not only to save souls but to shape Western civilization, is being turned into just another commodity. Worse, by slavishly following the culture, it becomes unable to critique that culture and to call us back to moral and spiritual sanity.

Not all contemporary Christianity is shallow, insipid, and secularized. Many people are rediscovering the faith in all of its depth, richness, and transcendence. One can even find books on the subject. But these Christians must increasingly struggle not only against the secular culture but against its mirror-image in the Christian subculture. In the meantime, those looking for a way out of our current cultural malaise often have a hard time finding authentic Christianity.

The good news is that human beings, whether in "the world" or the church, cannot live for long merely as economic animals, no matter how good the economy is. Some traditional churches are growing by welcoming what one pastor described to me as "casualties of the church-growth movement," those who crave a sense of transcendence and the practice of Biblical spirituality. Once Christian publishers become indistinguishable from the secular publishers, there will not be much need for them, and they will doubtless fade away or be absorbed into the generic marketplace. Then perhaps someone will start a tract society again. ☙

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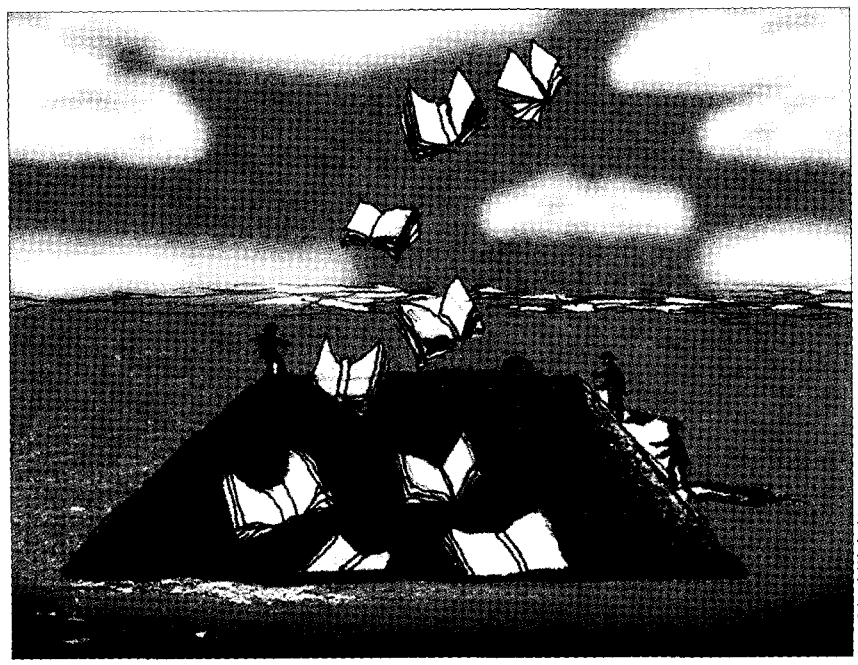
The Unscholarly World of Scholarly Publishing

by Gregory McNamee



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

University presses are in trouble these days. Beset by a decline (intellectual and numerical) in the specialized academic readership to which they have always catered, encountering rising production and overhead costs, and supported with fewer and fewer dollars from their parent administrations, many of them now face the prospect of closing their doors or remaking themselves so that they no longer publish the work they were created to publish in the first place—namely, scholarly books for scholarly readers.

The days, golden for a certain breed of academic, are long past when university presses served as printers for on-campus scholars—who would, the legend has it, drop off a manuscript on some abstruse subject and return some months later to pick up bound copies of their book. And gone, or rapidly disappearing (and rightly so), are the days when university presses acted mainly as gatekeepers not so much of the general culture but of academic staffing, publication by a reputable press once having been nearly a guarantee of tenure.

Those were the hallmarks of moneyed days, and those days are past. University presses now can take very few risks on meritorious work meant for small audiences. Driven by the need to fund their own operations, given the choice between publishing a second-rate book by an established scholar or a first-rate work by a newcomer, many now must resign themselves to the former, if only to pay the lighting bill.

Viewed in the commercial terms that are now brought to bear on them, university presses have always been in trouble. Specializing in books that almost by definition have tiny audiences, operating on slender margins, most have in the past been satisfied just to break even. Presses with large endowments (Stanford, Harvard) and the so-called Bible presses (Oxford, Cambridge) with strong backlists had less to worry about than the little houses attached to land-grant colleges and universities, but even the majors are scrambling these days to tighten their belts and generate greater incomes.

Things were not always so tight. When I went to work for a university press in 1981, it was still customary for large staffs directed by dilettantes or retirees from commercial publishing to lavish inordinate attention on the few titles they published each year. Parent institutions subsidized their presses without complaint, home-campus authors were able to find a home for their work right next door, and young editors were able to undertake a program of leisurely apprenticeship that educated them in all aspects of publishing. Those days were the last gasps of a generation of educational largesse, the golden age of university presses. It is long gone as well, a time, misty in memory for all but a few working members of the university-press community, when the federal government, threatened by Russia's Sputnik I launch, poured millions and millions of dollars into American universities to train scientists and general scholars alike. Textbooks were cheap (I still have a shelf of Harper Torchbooks paperbacks from the early 1970's, thick academic books with cover prices under three dollars), audiences were large, and publishers could issue almost anything they cared to with the knowledge that they could count on selling at least 1,500 copies of most books, even the most specialized monographs, through standing orders to university and research libraries.

Things are much different today. Federal money goes more to research than to general education. Textbooks are so expensive that many instructors prefer to make "course packets" of photocopied materials rather than burden their students with costs that verge on hardship. University presses can count on library standing orders of, on average, no more than 150 copies of a specialized title. And then there is the problem of declin-

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Gregory McNamee has worked in scholarly and trade publishing and bookselling since the early 1970's. His most recent book is Grand Canyon Place-Names *(Mountaineers Press).*

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ing academic readership. As John Lukacs writes in his memoir *Confessions of an Original Sinner*,

> Scholars no longer read much, not even each other's books. They will read *some* books; more often, articles; even more often, reviews; and the latter only in certain publications. . . . We are in the presence of a situation that has few precedents in the past, surely not in the history of the West. . . . Not only have common people lost the time and the inclination for reading; so have many academics.

The result is that the 100-odd university presses in America account for something like 15 percent of the titles published annually here, but for fewer than two percent of the publishing dollars earned. In the face of this discrepancy and of a scholarly world in utter disarray, these presses have had increasingly to question their purpose, and in many instances to change their courses.

Ten years ago Ken Arnold, then the young director of Rutgers University Press, caused a stir by suggesting at a national meeting of university presses that his colleagues follow his lead and stop publishing specialized monographs at all, recognizing that they simply did not sell. Many of his older colleagues were scandalized. One of them, the director of an Ivy League press, grumbled to me, "What about prestige?" He was doubtless thinking of an old standard of a university-press book's success: not sales, but the number of bibliographies in which the book subsequently appeared, a standing that would take years to track. Arthur Rosenthal, the director of Harvard University Press, put it succinctly: "A primary purpose of a university press is to function as a natural outlet for information, theory, speculation, and methodology that will influence human endeavor and enrich understanding in generations to come."

Such leisurely attitudes and measures are no longer current; bottom-line thinking is. Although many press directors would perhaps disavow it, they have in the main followed Arnold's suggestion: the academic monograph is very nearly an artifact, and the monographs that are published are usually issued in specialized, heavily subsidized series edited outside the house. The only money that is to be made in special-interest publishing, even the purest of scholarly editors agrees, is in publishing those fantastically expensive textbooks for captive audiences (in, say, medicine or astrophysics), or in publishing the kinds of books university presses once held in disdain—cookbooks, books of poems by creative-writing faculty, New Age tomes, novels.

They have good reason to think so, for publishing many of these books has indeed paid off. The University of New Mexico Press, for instance, was able to finance many worthy scholarly books in the years after it published Forrest Carter's *Education of Little Tree*, a putative memoir, in the back-to-the-land vein, of life among the Cherokee. The University of California Press similarly bankrolled many projects through the proceeds from worthy if not especially scholarly books like *Ishi, Last of His Tribe*; *Habits of the Heart*; and *The California Wine Atlas*. And university presses such as Hawaii, North Carolina, New England, and Mississippi have engaged in vigorous programs of regional publishing, competing with small commercial houses to produce works of local culture and of fiction set just outside their door.

Many other university presses are increasingly either turning wholeheartedly to trade publishing, hoping to recruit so-called midlist authors recently, and unceremoniously, downsized from the trade houses after having committed the sin of not writing blockbusters; or they are chasing after academic wills-o'-the-wisp, establishing programs of publishing in fields like "queer studies" and "whiteness studies," which share with the celebrity memoirs and diet guides of the trade world only a guaranteed few weeks in the sun—but which can, the hope goes, stir up enough immediate interest to sell a short run and turn a modest profit.

That those ephemeral fields are intellectual laughingstock seems to bother few editors. New York University physicist Alan Sokal demonstrated the bankruptcy of their approach in May 1996, when the fashionable postmodern journal *Social Text* published a heavily (and inventively) footnoted piece of his arguing that scholars could produce what he called a "liberatory" physics by unifying quantum mechanics and general relativity. The problem was that this unification cannot be accomplished under the laws of physics, at least as they are now understood; Sokal's paper was peppered with mathematical absurdities that would have tipped off the knowing reader, but few readers possessed enough knowledge about science to get the joke. Stung when Sokal's thinly disguised hoax was exposed, the editors nonetheless continued their anti-scientific cant, crying, in the words of one French literary theoretician, that scientists, "deprived of the fat budgets of the Cold War, are seeking a new menace. . . . It is no longer the war against the Soviets, but the one against 'postmodern' intellectuals from overseas." Among the loudest voices decrying Sokal's experiment were the editors and authors of Duke University Press, perhaps the nation's leading outlet of postmodernist theory.

Presses pursuing postmodern lists might do well to study the example of Routledge, a U.K.-based commercial publisher that established a list a few years ago in the then-booming field of "cultural studies." The list grew spectacularly and then collapsed with the decline of interest in that ill-defined field. (Routledge, fighting back from the edge of financial disaster, is now publishing more books in ancient history than in postmodernity.) Those houses, and presses striking out in all directions of the trade list, would also do well to heed the words of retired University of California Press director August Frugé, who warns, "It is not possible to move outside one's area of competence—area of acceptance by the book trade—and get any but second-choice manuscripts." The better authors, that is, will take their work to established publishers who can do the most to further their careers, leaving it to the tenure-seeking and the second-tier to fill the lists of the up-and-comers.

And to publish such authors, with few exceptions, is to court mediocrity, and worse. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner* (University of Wisconsin Press) is a prime example. The author, a Sioux feminist, asserts, among other things, that Indian history should be written by Indians alone, and she exhorts her readers to "resist the argument that the American Mother Earth, the native earth, should be legitimized as receptacle for the male colonist's seed." Cook-Lynn dismisses writers like John Updike, "a white, male member of a prosperous and efficient Euro-American (i.e., white) capitalist democracy," and the late Michael Dorris, a mixed-blood, for having written negatively of the alcoholic Sioux mother of his

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adopted son. The book is an appalling mess that sounds all the currently fashionable alarms. There are many others like it in current university-press catalogs, diatribes masquerading as scholarship.

Frugé urges publishing smaller but better lists, suggesting that, as a start, presses coldheartedly carve out the bottom ten percent from their current programs—the books that don't sell, the books that no one is especially proud of. He does not say, but I will add as an aside, that as a rule the university presses grounded in the sciences are financially fitter than those grounded in the humanities or social sciences. Although it is certainly susceptible to fads of its own, science is at least based on the empirical and is subject to testing beyond mere opinion; for this reason, as Thomas Kuhn has noted, scientific revolutions are longer in arriving than those in the humanities. This means, if nothing else, that books in the sciences have a longer shelf-life than those in the humanities.

If university presses become trade publishers, Frugé writes in his memoir, *A Skeptic Among Scholars*, they "shall soon be second-rate and expendable. But at our own specialty we can do better than others can, and we need only get the best possible scholarly books"—by which he means, he later adds, "honest research (and teaching) as free as possible from political intent." But the university these days is the most heavily politicized venue in American life, and it seems unlikely that university presses will disavow the culture in which they exist.

Also unlikely, at least for the moment, is the establishment of a golden mean that, to my mind, would be a reasonable solution to the present crisis in scholarly publishing. In this model, university presses would communicate worthwhile and meaningful scholarship to the larger public, connecting for once academic endeavor to the general culture. (Precedents for such a program can be found, but not in the United States; I am thinking of the English Open University and the French *Que sais-je?* series.) Outstanding books in "queer studies" and "whiteness studies" and all the other special-interest studies would certainly be among the books published under this program, provided that they were indeed outstanding. One such book, and one of the more interesting social-science books in recent years, is Philippe Bourgois' *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Cambridge University Press), a study of lives brutalized by drug addiction, poverty, crime, and violence. Bourgois spent five years in a Puerto Rican barrio in East Harlem studying the culture of crack cocaine as another anthropologist would an exotic tribe. His thoughts on the theory and practice of anthropological investigation often run counter to the received wisdom of voters and policymakers: "Suffering," he writes, "is usually hideous; it is a solvent of human integrity, and ethnographers never want to make the people they study look ugly. This imperative to sanitize the vulnerable is particularly strong in the United States, where survival-of-the-fittest, blame-the-victim theories of individual action constitute a popular 'common sense.'"

This is controversial work, and sure to offend some sensibilities. It is also meaningful and an example, I think, of the kind of books university presses will want to pursue if they are to fulfill their mission: to publish scholarship well, and to bring that scholarship to the largest possible audience, without going broke in the process.

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Three Poems by Wendell Berry

To a Writer of Reputation

Having begun in public anonymity,
you did not count on this
literary enterprise by which
some body becomes a "name"—
as if you have died and have become
a part of mere geography. Greet,
therefore, the roadsigns on the road.

Or perhaps you have become deaf and blind,
or merely inanimate, and may
be studied without embarrassment
by the disinterested, the dispassionate,
and the merely curious,
not fearing to be overheard.
Hello to the grass, then, and to the trees.

Or perhaps you are secretly
still alert and moving, no longer the one
they have named, but another,
named by yourself,
carrying away this morning's showers
for your private delectation.
Hello, river.

The Rejected Husband

After the storm and the new
stillness of the snow, he returns
to the graveyard, as though
he might turn back the white coverlet,
slip in beside her as he used to do,
and again feel, beneath his hand,
her flesh quicken and turn warm.
But he is not her husband now.
To participate in resurrection, one
first must be dead. And he goes
back into the whitened world, alive.

In Art Rowanberry's Barn

In Art Rowanberry's barn, when Art's death
had become quietly a fact among
the other facts, Andy Catlett found
a jacket made of the top half
of a pair of coveralls after
the legs wore out, for Art
never wasted anything.
Andy found a careful box made
of woodscraps with a strap
for a handle; it contained
a handful of small nails
wrapped in a piece of newspaper,
several large nails, several
rusty bolts with nuts and washers,
some old harness buckles
and rings, rusty but usable,
several small metal boxes, empty,
and three hickory nuts
hollowed out by mice.
And all of these things Andy
put back where they had been,
for time and the world and other people
to dispense with as they might,
but not by him to be disprized.
This long putting away
of things maybe useful was not all
of Art's care-taking; he cared
for creatures also, every day
leaving his tracks in dust, mud
or snow as he went about
looking after his stock, or gave
strength to lighten a neighbor's work.
Andy found a bridle made
of several lengths of baling twine
knotted to a rusty bit,
an old set of chain harness,
four horseshoes of different sizes,
and three hammerstones picked up
from the opened furrow on days
now as perfectly forgotten
as the days when they were lost.
He found a good farrier's knife,
an awl, a key to a lock
that would no longer open.

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Over My Dead Body

by J.O. Tate

"The thing is to squeeze the last drop out of the medium you have learned to use. The aim is not essentially different from the aim of Greek tragedy, but we are dealing with a public that is only semi-literate and we have to make an art out of a language they can understand."

—Raymond Chandler

Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1930s and 40s
edited by Robert Polito
New York: The Library of America;
990 pp., $35.00

Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1950s
edited by Robert Polito
New York: The Library of America;
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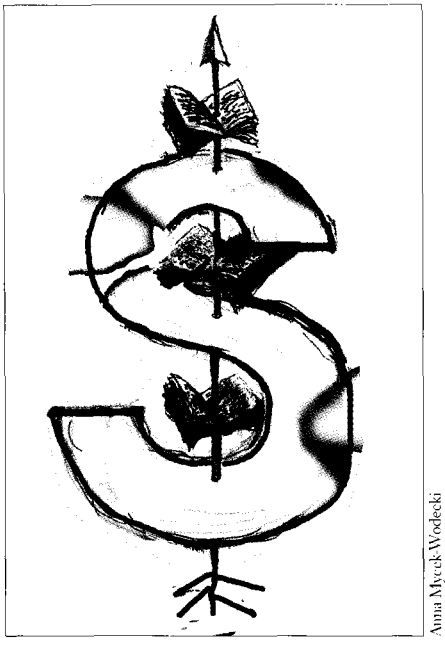

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

These two volumes of crime novels, bound and printed as classics, challenge our notion of the American canon. Or perhaps they simply remind us of what we were actually reading when we were supposed to be reading something else. If reading is good for you, bad reading is even better.

To put it another way, our *Pleiade* has become a *Serie Noire*. It was ever thus. In the British tradition, of course, there was that scandalous background extending from Robert Greene's pamphlets on coney-catching to Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Fielding's *Jonathan Wilde*, and on to the Gothic novel, the Newgate novel, *Oliver Twist* and *The Moonstone*, and the early Greene. The French tradition, meantime, offers an extended parallel in criminal fiction. In Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, and Camus, we ratchet the guillotine. Dostoyevsky's ax murderer was possibly redeemed, but not before he was a very bad boy indeed. Here in Hicksville, we have our own distinctive tradition of rough stuff. Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville limned the metaphysics of transgression in ways that have immortalized their names. They left upon the vectors of crime a stink of intellect—a Limburger of cerebration. The other tradition is the vulgar one, the most notable practitioner of which was George Lippard. But we must not forget in our puritanical/sentimental way, that Huckleberry Finn himself was a notable juvenile delinquent. Louisa May Alcott, who made nice in *Little Women* and *Little Men* and *Under the Lilacs*, also scribbled subversive melodramas on the side. American innocence has always been related to violence. Billy Budd was, we tend to forget, technically guilty. Where else but in America would Truman Capote, of all people, have written *In Cold Blood*? Leslie Fiedler and Norman Mailer are not the only Americans who have understood a relation between Captain Ahab and Charles Manson. Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway, perhaps more than any others, connected the American traditions of Gothic terror to the authentic voice of our own speech.

Thus the stage was set for the crime novel as a work of art in the vein of the "lyrical novel" as we have known it—the best tradition of American fiction. So the question about these crime novels is not whether they are criminal enough, but whether they are sufficiently novels. Are they, after all, literature? Not all of them were published as paperback originals, though we may remember them that way. Geoffrey O'Brien's *Hardboiled America* reminds us of the glory days of paperbacks back in the late 40's and 50's, when Faulkner's and Steinbeck's books looked like Cornell Woolrich's. You may perhaps remember those lurid covers, icons of American art—unmade beds, whiskey bottles, lots of underwear, sometimes a handgun—which somehow said more to me than any other images of books ever did. And yet it is not hard to see many of the crime novels as moral fables. These narrations are defined by crime, but they are as wholesome as Sunday School lessons. Crime doesn't pay. That's a point that was made by Allen Tate in testimony about the

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

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contested publication of Hubert Selby, Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. Buying sleaze and looking down a blue nose, the American public has been confused about this point since the days of Cotton Mather, and still is.

Volume one of these crime stories is much the better of the two, boasting several classics. These were the books that people actually read for pleasure instead of duty, and then declared that they had really loved *The Golden Bowl*. Yet Stephen Crane and Jack London showed us something about the lower depths, and Hemingway's story "The Killers" implied much that would be developed by others. *To Have and Have Not* is Hemingway imitating his imitators, and writing a left-wing crime novel himself. Faulkner had his innings in *Sanctuary*, one of his best books. *The Great Gatsby* was first filmed in 1949 as a sentimental gangster movie, which was an oddly fitting approach. Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* seemed to me to owe something of its plot to Dashiell Hammett's *The Glass Key*, and tonal inflections to Raymond Chandler. So if American literature has so often been the crime novel, then the crime novel is American literature, as these collections deliberately suggest.

If these novels are not to be confused with the lurid covers of fond memory, then neither are they to be confused with the movies derived from them. James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934) was filmed twice, but readers will find his Cora to be no Lana Turner. Horace McCoy's *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1935) was at last filmed in 1969, and faithfully too; yet that version is lacking in impact. Edward Anderson's *Thieves Like Us* (1937) was also filmed many years out of context (1974), Kenneth Fearing's *The Big Clock* (1946) effectively done in 1948, William Lindsay Gresham's *Nightmare Alley* (1946) rather well treated the next year, and so on. These facts may remind us of some good and some not so good films; also, perhaps, that just as great novels don't make great films, lesser novels too may be superior to the films derived from them.

In looking again at *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, we would do well to recall that Albert Camus used the novel as a model for *L'Etranger*. I think we would also have to say that some aspects of Cain's book have not worn well. "I bit her. I sank my teeth into her lips so deep I could feel the blood spurt into my mouth. It was running down her neck when I carried her upstairs" (end of Chapter Two). Why does the narrator sound more like Count Dracula than a blue-collar lover boy? However, Cain's story of a descent into hell and even of a kind of redemption in death has powerful drive, a highly appealing idiomatic simplicity, and enough irony for a Greek tragedian. Nick Papadakis is "greasy," but I think Nick is a Greek because Cain wanted to write the melodrama as Greek tragedy. Camus was hooked by Cain because Frank is executed for killing Cora Papadakis, which he didn't do, and not for killing Nick, which they did. Camus remembered the swimming scene for his novel, but in Cain that scene leads to a sentimental swerve towards married love, cut short by fate. Treated contemptuously by Edmund Wilson and Joyce Carol Oates, Cain was some kind of a writer nevertheless. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* has power, form, irony, and verbal resource. It is hard to know what more we can ask for than that, and I am glad I read the old thing again. I couldn't put it down. I was reminded of the first time I read that sleazy moral fable 40 years ago. Good writer, James M. Cain. Doesn't waste your time with the fancy stuff.

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?, Horace McCoy's first novel, is a masterpiece that was recognized by the French more than half a century ago; his novels remain in print in French, though not in English. This republication is therefore doubly welcome. *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, with its typographical experimentation and expressive collision of form and idioms, juxtaposing the language of the judge's sentence with Robert's narrative, is a landmark of modernist penetration into popular literature. Horace McCoy became a Hollywood hack, but at least once he roused himself to prove he deserved his French reputation. *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye* (1948) is his attempt to write a gangster story as the Great American Novel, and it too deserves to be revived. To think of McCoy in Paris, receiving his recognition before he died of a heart attack at the age of 58, is to reflect that sometimes justice really is served.

If Horace McCoy's "objective lyricism" and formal disposition has power, Edward Anderson's discourse has beauty. *Thieves Like Us* is a masterpiece of writing and should be used in creative writing classes as a model of dictional purity and the limited third person point of view. *Thieves Like Us* was in fact based on interviews Anderson conducted with his cousin Roy Johnson, who was serving a life sentence for armed robbery. Filmed twice, the novel was cited by Raymond Chandler for its forgotten greatness, and we can see why. The gritty and doom-laden tale heads where it inevitably must as the stick-up artists fend off the fate they provoke. When a self-serving criminal declares of the bankers, "They're thieves like us," we might recall that even with computerized systems banks now take longer to clear a check than ever before. They get their float, and guess who from. The left-wing view of capitalism has a legitimate populist, not a Marxist, base.

The poet Kenneth Fearing, author of *The Big Clock*, once told the FBI he was "not yet" a member of the Communist Party. *The Big Clock* is set in the world of big-time corporate publishing in a way that seems oddly contemporary. Its varied narrators break up the point of view, but I think the prose is the least distinctive in this volume. William Lindsay Gresham's *Nightmare Alley*, however, is something else. Gresham himself was a communist who served as a medic in the Lincoln Brigade. He later converted to Presbyterianism and then to Zen Buddhism, the occult, and Dianetics. He struggled with alcoholism and committed suicide in 1962. But *Nightmare Alley* is not a confused work, though one passage, in Chapter XIX, is almost pure Popular Front agitprop. *Nightmare Alley* is

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not so much a lyrical novel as a restricted epic. The world of the carnival is presented as a trope, an image of society, not unlike the *Pequod*. Stanton Carlisle learns "the secret" of deception and manipulation and goes from being a lowly huckster to a classy con man. Nothing is better than the "Reverend" Carlisle's spurious sanctimony as he bilks the pigeons whom he deceives with phony seances. Stan Carlisle crashes because he runs into a deceiver more ruthless than he, and winds up as the lowest of the low: a geek who bites the heads off chickens at a carny. *Nightmare Alley* is remarkable for its range, its Tarot card symbolism, and its elaboration of the image of the magus as the ultimate con man—an image indeed of all kinds of mystification, including religion, advertising, big business, and society in general. The self-possessed Stan is inside a mess of anxiety. The novel is Freudian as well as Marxist, and a tour-de-force of sleaze. Its strength is its bid for Great American Novel status. Its weakness is probably some failures of language or hasty execution. Even so, *Nightmare Alley* is an infernal tour of evil with grim national implications for its time and for today. As a feat of writing, this novel, like the others, must make us wonder where this kind of gutsy engagement went to when it disappeared from the publishing scene.

The case of Cornell Woolrich must also give us pause. In his eccentricity—he was a virtual writing machine who lived with his mother in a hotel in New York City for 25 years—he offers as indelible an image of the American writer as Edgar Allan Poe or Emily Dickinson. Woolrich, a.k.a. William Irish and George Hopley, was a fountain of material for pulp magazines, paperback originals, film, and television. He was not so much a gifted writer as something else—a tormented wordspinner with a flair for melodrama. *I Married a Dead Man* (1948), filmed as *No Man of Her Own*, had its genesis in a story, "They Call Me Patrice," originally published in *Today's Woman* (April 1946). The provenance explains something about the cornball prose and hysterical atmosphere, the Mary Roberts Rinehart "Had I but known!" qualities, but does not explain why this meretricious exercise should be so compelling. Woolrich does indeed rise to a kind of poetry in the suffocating tale of impersonation and murder. The Greeks have their Homer, we have this: "Life was such a crazy thing, life was such a freak. A man was dead. A love was blasted into nothingness. But a cigarette still sent up smoke in a dish. And an ice cube still hovered unmelted in a highball glass. The things you wanted to last, they didn't; the things it didn't matter about, they hung on forever."

Volume two, *American Noir of the 1950's*, is not nearly as compelling or compulsory as the first volume. The presence of Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) must nevertheless be noted. This first person narrative from beyond the grave (like Cain's) is a trip through the hellish mind of a sociopath or paranoid schizophrenic who has diagnosed his own childhood trauma. Disguised as a cliché-spouting deputy sheriff in a Texas town, the lethally deceptive killer grabs the reader by the lapels and won't let go. He knows it, too.

> In lots of books I read, the writer seems to go haywire every time he reaches a high point. He'll start leaving out punctuation and running his words together and babble about stars flashing and sinking into a deep, dreamless sea. And you can't figure out whether the hero's laying his girl or a cornerstone. I guess that kind of crap is supposed to be pretty deep stuff—a lot of the book reviewers eat it up, I notice. But the way I see it is, the writer is too goddamn lazy to do his job. And I'm not lazy, whatever else I am. I'll tell you everything.

A killer itself, written in four weeks as a paperback original, *The Killer Inside Me* is by far the finest work in the second volume. Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) was the basis for a fine film, Rene Clement's *Purple Noon*, in which the sociopathic chameleon and killer gets his at the end. But the point of Highsmith's book is that the talented Tom Ripley gets away with everything. On the prowl in Europe, this American is far from innocent as he lies, and forges, and impersonates, and kills. I noticed at the beginning that Ripley had been asked by the parents of a weak American artist to persuade their son to come home from Italy, and thought of the similarity to the initial situation of James's *The Ambassadors*. Sure enough, as Ripley sails for Europe, a James novel is recommended to him (Chapter Three) and is then specified (Chapter Six) as *The Ambassadors*. Highsmith's witty reversal of James's international theme was in some way related to her own life as an expatriate writer in Europe.

The theme of the artist is repeated in Charles Willeford's *Pick-up* (1955) and David Goodis's *Down There* (1956), though in neither case is it convincingly displayed. I don't find that these novels are written on a plane comparable to those I have cited. And Chester Hines' *The Real Cool Killers* (1959) seems to me to be pulp fiction without redeeming elements. Telegraphic one-sentence paragraphs do not a discourse make, or at least not here. We may note, however, that Chester Hines actually served time for armed robbery.

So what do we have besides a lot of terrific books to read? Behind the literary considerations, there is much. It is chastening to read in these authors' backgrounds of broken homes and divorces, alcoholism, political radicalism, and—in at least two cases—sexual deviation. If that changes our cozy image of what a writer is, so much the better. In terms of the myth behind the tales, the overarching theme is a perception of the social lie, the fraud of bourgeois propriety that masks a monstrosity of manipulation, lust, and violence. Cain's Cora Papadakis wanted middle-class respectability. Highsmith's Tom Ripley succeeded in becoming an elegant, continental gentleman. Gresham's Stan Carlisle became a pious spiritualist who preyed upon the guilt of the wealthy. It is not a pretty picture of America, but neither is it a false one. The shamelessness of politicians, lawyers, and corporate leaders, in inverse relation to their sanctimony, is enough to provoke—if not to justify—any response you care to mention. The worst would be to become not a criminal but a sleek fraud who uses the veneer of civility to hide an irresponsible depravity. Shakespeare and Dickens, those popular authors, knew that very well. So do Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and, deep down, the White House.

Cain and McCoy and Anderson and Gresham and others have not only written better than many "respectable" middle-brow novelists (and many pain-in-the-neck highbrows as well), but they have shown more about our national psychology and sociology. Such unpleasant truths are actually a ground for recovery—homeopathic medicines that are, finally, wholesome. ◁©▷

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The Kennedy Legacy

by James Hill

"'Tis time to fear when tyrants seem to kiss."
—William Shakespeare

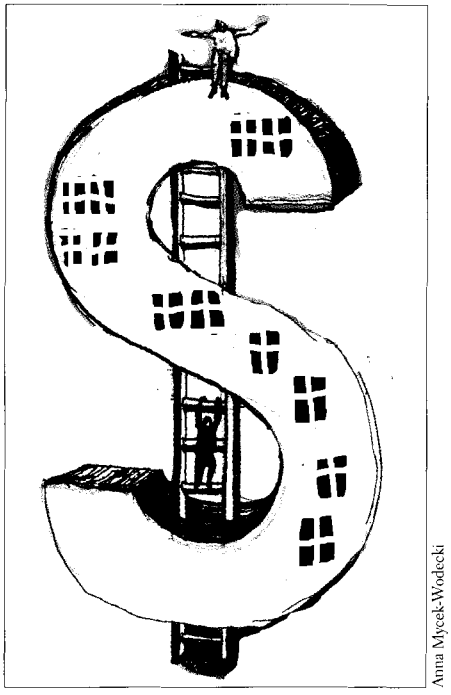
The Dark Side of Camelot
by Seymour M. Hersh
New York: Little, Brown & Company;
498 pages; $26.95

◆

"Just the facts, ma'am." Joe Friday's prescription for getting at the truth has been followed by Seymour Hersh, whose investigation of the secret life of John F. Kennedy, America's "prince of the people," is peppered with facts as recalled by those—many of them on their death beds or close to it—who guarded the secrets while spinning up the image of Camelot.

The facts, indeed, are devastating. But then, they are also there for the telling. Had the guardians of these secrets—in particular the big-name journalists of the era who glorified in being pals with JFK—put the national interest ahead of personal loyalty, the seamy side of Camelot would have been exposed in time and American history from the darkest period of the Cold War might have taken a different turn, perhaps for the better—or so Hersh argues.

More than three decades after his assassination, John Fitzgerald Kennedy's reputation continues to preserve its saintly luster, resisting the tarnish of time and truth. Those of us alive in 1963 will carry to our graves the shock of a young President cut down as he rode through the streets of Dallas by the senseless act of a lone gunman perched in a schoolbook warehouse. Never mind that the autopsy, with its finding that the President had been suffering from a long-running case of venereal disease, was sealed, or that incriminating records and logs were removed from the White House and presumably destroyed. In his moment of death, John F. Kennedy became the



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

symbol of a new generation of Americans denied, by violence, its place at the table; he has haunted the national psyche ever since.

Being a practical, God-fearing people, Americans naturally wanted to know why this horror had visited them. When the answers began coming in—that the assassination was the work of a nobody intent on impressing someone, most likely his estranged Russian-born wife—practical God-fearing Americans did something entirely unpractical: they suspended their belief in reality. And so for the first couple of decades following the assassination, they pursued hundreds of conspiracy theories all the way to their inevitable dead ends: Johnson did it, Castro did it, the mob did it. Eventually, the facts got in the way. While no credible person has ever come forward to claim credit for the conspiracy, plenty of those who had a piece of the combination to the secret chamber at least made a start at telling what they knew, while attempting to present their stories in such a way as to maintain intact the myth of a wealthy but socially shunned family—descendants of Irish immigrants—attaining the pinnacle of American power to assume the role of protectors of all the downtrodden. Theodore Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., published books intended to confirm the greatness of the man on whose behalf they had labored; aides Kenny O'Donnell and Dave Powers (skipping a few details such as the procurement of the presidential bimbos) penned a loving tribute to the late President; and soon everyone who had been anyone in the New Frontier was dropping a detail here, a detail there, usually for reasons that one can only assume were ultimately self-serving.

As serious historians compared these notes and accounts, however, an altogether different picture of John Kennedy began to emerge: that of a wife-cheating playboy with a sexual addiction above the heroin level; a President who cavalierly disregarded the checks and balances of constitutional government in order to have his way, even if that way almost started a nuclear war; a man who made pacts with the devil (mobster Sam Giancana), while bopping his girlfriend; the scion of a clan so infatuated with their purchased position as America's single-family aristocracy that they would go to the bunker to protect it. Still, if the portrait no longer flattered, the myth at least was secure. As recently as the early 1990's, two books—*JFK: Reckless Youth* by British biographer Nigel Hamilton and *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* by Richard Reeves—presented the 35th President, warts and all, in ways that left Jack Kennedy an heroic figure nonetheless.

Seymour Hersh gives the lion's share of the credit for having opened the vault to these two works and to Doris Kearns Goodwin's *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* and to Michael R. Beschloss's *The Crisis Years*. He recognizes others as well in source notes (but, alas, not in a bibliography, which is missing from the book). Clearly, however, the treasure

James Hill is working on a book about the proliferation of gambling in America.

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trove mined by Hersh are the interviews he conducted with insiders—some well known, others shadowy figures—associated with the New Frontier, or with their heirs. Interviews, of course, are a most valuable way of checking one story against others, and Hersh uses them skillfully to establish not only Kennedy's sexual romps (including one with a suspected East German spy) but Joe Sr.'s iron control over the career of his second-born son; Jack (and Bobby's) tendency to go it alone, often impetuously, on issues of national security; Jack's secret (and short-lived) marriage to Durie Malcolm; Sam Giancana's involvement in stealing the 1960 election for Kennedy; even the long-forgotten TFX scandal, in which Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara suddenly shifted gears and awarded a lucrative contract for the construction of fighter aircraft to the hopelessly incompetent General Dynamics over the Pentagon-preferred Boeing Co. (Did a break-in, viewed by FBI agents conducting their own surveillance, at presidential mistress Judith Exner's home expose the administration to blackmail on the TFX issue? No one knows.) These revelations, and many others, deliver a stunning and embarrassing depiction of American government suspended above the abyss.

Sy Hersh, a muckraking journalist and darling of the left for his investigative reporting on the massacre at My Lai, on any number of government abuses, and on the downing of a Korean jumbo jet by the Soviets in the 1980's, has not been pleasing the usual suspects by popping the golden bubble surrounding Camelot. Garry Wills, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, calls it a second assassination; others have been less generous. The response was predictable, given the amount of love Americans have poured out on a man who remained almost entirely unknown before—his popularity sinking and his re-election in jeopardy—he was elevated to martyrdom. History is slow to unlock its secrets; nevertheless, these usually will out.

What I find missing from *The Dark Side of Camelot* is perspective. What does this all mean? Since it is fairly well established that both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations used mob sources in an attempt to kill Fidel Castro, should not the country have mounted a criminal investigation to determine the full extent of culpability and bring those responsible to justice? As Hersh notes,

> [Robert] Mahue believes today that the Kennedy administration was criminally responsible in permitting the Cuban exiles to land at the Bay of Pigs without the support necessary for survival. "When we called off the [second] air raid and the adequate air cover, we inherited the responsibility of calling off the invasion," he told me. "We could not allow those kids to hit those beaches and be destroyed by hardware that should have been destroyed by us hours before. And as far as I'm concerned, we thereby indulged in mass murder."

Mahue was the former FBI agent who served as the go-between in the American government's efforts to enlist the mob in eliminating Fidel Castro. Missing from his concern for lives lost on a beach in Cuba—a betrayal he came to consider criminally irresponsible—is any hint of irony regarding the decision to deal with criminals in the first place. Many of those who were "just doing their jobs" lived for many years after leaving the service of the administration; some are still alive today. Is there a statute of limitations on treason? Or procurement? Dave Powers, had he been acting for anyone other than the President of the United States, would surely have served jail time on a vice rap, especially since the director of the FBI (we know, thanks to Freedom of Information Act releases) and the President's own Secret Service detail (ditto, thanks to their frank interviews with Hersh) have established beyond the possibility of a doubt that his activities, and the security breaches they caused, were familiar to many at the time they occurred. And what about campaign finance violations? Hersh cites one case after another in which bundles of cash were thrown about—including during the West Virginia primary in 1960—by the man who is now the senior senator from Massachusetts. What, finally, about the national interest? Hersh tells of a Secret Service agent who "had the unceremonious chore of bringing sexually explicit photographs of a naked president with various paramours to the Mickelson Gallery, one of Washington's most distinguished art galleries, for framing." In another of his interviews, he gets confirmation of the story from Sidney

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Ayn Rand's attempt to found a new morality is shown to be less than what she took it to be. The defense of fractional reserve banking made by Alan Greenspan in Rand's book on capitalism is related. Other important issues are discussed.

Considerably less relativistic than Objectivism, *The Stance Of Atlas* is also implicitly more individualistic.

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Mickelson, who ran the gallery. Left hanging for the reader is the question of what happened to these photographs. Were they destroyed, and if so by whom? Did the FBI, which seemed to know more about JFK than JFK himself, ever see them? Did they become part of Hoover's blackmailing of the President? Did JFK send copies to the participants, much as other politicians send pictures of themselves greeting Mr. Megabucks in the hope that the contribution channel will remain open?

All of these stories feature some form of criminal conduct, not to mention a great deal of stupidity. Yet out of the morass came only broad limitations regarding assassinations of foreign leaders and wiretapping and a gaggle of restrictions placed on both the FBI and the CIA, largely as a result of Watergate. Few people entered the criminal dock as a result of having carried water for Kennedy or members of his family, and those who did were usually victims themselves of a double-cross. No American official was ever indicted on war crimes charges despite a plethora of evidence of criminal intent to initiate and escalate the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War; and today Washington maintains its stranglehold on Cuba by a draconian embargo that owes its longevity to the fact that the Kennedy brothers not only got their noses rubbed in the dirt by Castro but failed in their attempts to kill him off as well. No one did time—including Frank Sinatra, who served as middleman in establishing the link between the Kennedys and the mob for the theft of the 1960 election. Money, the mother's milk of politics, still flows, with JFK's Arkansas lookalike boldly insisting that cash passed under the table from Asian interests constitutes no violation of the laws. More importantly though—and I think this is the critical point that Americans refuse to face today—is the fact that, since the presidency of John F. Kennedy, the office has failed to reform itself. Instead, it has become more imperial and arrogant, its occupants more trapped in a bunker of their own construction. And we are the worse as a nation for it.

At least the failure has been bipartisan. Under the elected kings (and one appointed one) who succeeded John F. Kennedy, we have endured the continued quagmire of Vietnam (Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon); Watergate and the use of unsavory characters to spy on and disrupt domestic activities (Nixon); the *Mayaguez* incident (Gerald Ford); the taking of U.S. diplomats as hostages by the Iranians and the disaster resulting from the attempt to rescue them (Jimmy Carter); the selling of arms to terrorists to finance counterrevolutionary activities (Ronald Reagan); and the overthrow of the Panamanian government and the mass slaughter of Iraqi civilians (George Bush). In other words, all Presidents since Kennedy have felt emboldened in some way or another to emulate him by initiating risky and legally dubious operations in the name of national security, bypassing in the process the checks and balances of the Constitution. Nixon got caught, and bounced. Reagan came close to paying dearly for Iran-Contra. George Bush, the only President who took his military adventure (against Iraq) to Congress, bought it at the polls, in part because he failed to finish the job.

Yet the White House, as an institution, is more secure than ever. No one gets far by proposing a single presidential term; no one seriously considers adopting a parliamentary system, in which the President would be the leader of the congressional majority. No one in Congress seriously proposes drastic reductions in the White House budget, or refusals to pay for what already is budgeted, as in the case of the United Nations. The press, which continues sheepishly to explain that, as recently as the Kennedy administration, you simply did not report certain things, now gives us tittle-tattle at every chance. Gary Hart, a bright young man with an attitude, seems to have been the only victim.

And then, of course, came Bubba. Liberals fell over themselves proclaiming young Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas the new JFK when it became clear that he was going to capture the Democratic nomination in 1992; their task was made considerably easier when Clinton, at the convention, produced a newsreel from the 1960's showing him shaking hands with the martyr himself. How on the mark those people were! Clinton's morals are possibly indictable, his policies are suspect, and he has put Americans at risk for even more vacuous reasons than most of his predecessors were willing to accept. He sent American troops to occupy Haiti and restore a democracy that had never existed (and still doesn't); he introduced Iranian (yes, Iranian) arms into the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and, once he had tipped the military balance, sent American troops there to establish what may well become a never-ending presence in the Balkans. All this, moreover, before the time of his reelection! Clinton, with his finger on the greatest nuclear arsenal ever assembled, pushes the North Atlantic Treaty Organization eastward toward the highly unstable components of the former Soviet Union, thus threatening a new arms race.

Journalists of the stature of Roger Morris and Ambrose Evans-Pritchard have written books exposing Clinton's sins to little effect, though no one, to judge from conversation down at the local barbershop, trusts him for a minute, especially if their daughters happen to be around. His shadowy connection with the CIA and drug-runners has been probed by Morris, Evans-Pritchard, and Alexander Cockburn to no avail, while his best friend and former enforcer at the Justice Department has served jail time and is suspected of receiving hush money. So how much book do we want on a President? Not much, apparently, while he is still in office. Which raises the intriguing question: If we had known about JFK then what we know about JFK now, would we have elected him President in 1960? Re-elected him in 1964? That is difficult to say. While Bill Clinton's rebound in the polls in the wake of the breaking Lewinsky scandal may suggest the likely answer, it is more likely that public indifference is simply the measure of the moral decline of the American people in the second half of the 20th century.

John F. Kennedy's multiple indiscretions were appalling, no doubt. On policy matters, however, he was only following through with a program for concentrated power centered in the White House and subject to little or no oversight that was begun by Franklin Roosevelt and further promoted by presidents Truman and Eisenhower. On moral matters, look up Warren G. Harding. Kennedy alone must have felt that he was up to the job. The legions recruited to build the legend while keeping their lips sealed were released from all obligation on November 22, 1963, and they have been building the record, in fits and starts, ever since. It is we as a people who have not acted upon that record. Perhaps we never will.

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To Hell and Back

by Wayne Allensworth

Few Returned: Twenty-Eight Days on the Russian Front, Winter 1942-1943
by Eugenio Corti
Translated by Peter Edward Levy
Columbia: University of Missouri Press;
251 pp., $19.95

◆

"Will no one tell me what she sings? Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow / For old, unhappy far-off things, And Battles long ago." Wordsworth, perhaps, was prompted by recollections of an age before warfare meant the mechanized destruction of all in its path. Yet war, to paraphrase an American precursor of Zhukov and Guderian, has always been hell. At Agincourt, the French knights were mowed down by the massed projectiles of the English bowmen. Then, as the mounted knights in headlong flight crashed into the oncoming wave of their own men-at-arms at the rear, the heavily armored French, piled on one another in heaps taller than a man, were slaughtered by crushing blows from hammer and sword. The English troops literally waded through a sea of blood. Many of the Frenchmen who had pleaded for quarter were butchered on the spot, and the English even incinerated some of the French wounded who had taken refuge in cottages not far from the battle. The remaining prisoners were held for ransom. It is significant that Henry V, who ordered the slaughter of the prisoners, was forced to employ archers—men who stood outside the medieval system of chivalry—to do a deed that placed at risk the king's honor as a Christian monarch. Chivalry (however imperfectly observed), buttressed by the Christian faith, served to restrain the dogs of war in the time before ideology had eroded Christianity and technological progress made what John Keegan called the "moving battlefield" a reality. From Agincourt we moved to the Somme, Kursk, and, ultimately, to mass terror and Hiroshima. In the modern era, warfare means entire populations engaged in a dehumanizing clash of opposed barbarians.

Eugenio Corti's moving memoir is a chronicle of a fateful retreat become a panicked rout in the frozen wastes of the Russian front at Stalingrad. Corti uses his considerable literary talents—this, his first book, was originally published in postwar Italy, before the author became an accomplished novelist and essayist—to convey to the reader the experience of a sensitive man who has seen his fellows degraded below the image of God and who has himself felt the elemental urge of the beast in his breast. Derived from notes Corti made at the time, the book reveals the thoughts and emotions of one of these atoms of suffering humanity. In Corti's account, the battlefield—its storm of steel sweeping over and leveling whole cities and villages, reducing the dead and the living to beings "that had lost all human form" and every sign of humanity—amounts to a preview of Hell, of man cut off completely from God and "set increasingly against Him."

In this manmade hell, the mechanical inhumanity of the Germans, who dispassionately rape, loot, and murder, and the survivalist savagery of the Russians, who show no mercy even to their own, are juxtaposed with the moral failure of the Italians, who abandoned their wounded comrades to die on the interminable steppe, "obedient by now to a single animal instinct: self preservation." As a wounded man begs for help, Corti confesses his own failure to resist the ferocity of cruel circumstance: "Within me," he wrote, "a coldness was forming no less merciless than the cold surrounding me. My eyes followed the poor young wretch as he limped away again; in my soul I felt a useless torment." Russian, German, and Italian become indistinguishable from one another: "Near the end of the village were numerous dead Russians. One was wearing an Italian great coat." German, Italian, and Russian are united in Corti's narrative by the icy flames of the battlefield: "Little by little, I was beginning to feel that I was no longer a distinct unit, with my own identity—no, I was . . . a minute part of endless human pain and sorrow."

Ultimately Corti's passage through hell is a baptism, convincing him of the "possibility of salvation." As Corti reveals, the love of God that inspires the simplest act of kindness by men reaches, as Dostoyevsky contended in his parable of the onion in *The Brothers Karamazov*, even to the depths of Hell. So many, to paraphrase the great Russian novelist, even as they have sinned, gave an onion and redeemed a fallen nature. The Russian peasants with "their compassion for any suffering being," the hardened Italian veteran who refuses to abandon a wounded comrade, Corti's friend Zanotti who, despite "his youth rebelling against the prospect of death," volunteers for a deadly assignment, taking the place of an exhausted countryman—all, like the snow "which seemed to be forcing itself . . . to push back" against the seemingly "impenetrable darkness" of the hellish vault of the battlefield, resisted the night. In this way, Corti came to believe, "God reclaims the suffering of men, and above all that of innocent men—crucified as Christ was crucified." Their suffering was "in no way wasted."

In Corti's war, the mechanized horrors of battle and the conflict's epic scale came to represent for the then 21-year-old artillery officer the whole of human experience: of Eden (prewar Italy) and of the Fall, of the possibility of atonement and redemption, and of grace through the self-sacrifice of innocents. Corti himself was saved—by God through his mother's prayers, as he came to believe—for a purpose. "I offer these pages," he writes in the book's dedication, "through my mother's hands, to the Madonna of my people, the Madonna of the Wood. May they be above all a prayer for those who shared those days with me, who fought and suffered with me, who hoped so desperately with me, and in the end remained lifeless on the interminable roads of the steppe." As an act of atonement then, before God and his fallen comrades—and, especially, for those who refused to become denizens of the modern hell—Corti offers this powerful testament.

Wayne Allensworth writes from Purcellville, Virginia. His book, The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization, and Post-Communist Russia, *will be published this summer by Rowman & Littlefield.*

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They're Coming, They're Coming

by Samuel Francis

The Threat: The Secret Alien Agenda
by David M. Jacobs
New York: Simon and Schuster;
288 pp., $23.00

Thinking about unidentified flying objects can be a useful exercise, whatever we believe about extraterrestrial life and its presence among us. If nothing else, it forces us to deal seriously with those perennial questions that are as useful to scientists and philosophers as they are to lawyers and politicians on congressional investigating committees: What do we know? How do we know it?

David M. Jacobs, an historian at Temple University, has been thinking about UFOs since his graduate school days, and what he has published about the subject over the years is among the most respected work on it. Mr. Jacobs believes UFOs are real—that is, that they are the interstellar transportation vehicles of an intelligent species of beings from another planet—and that a good deal of what is reported about them and their occupants is also real.

His chief concern is with the phenomenon of "abductions"—that is, the claims by a wide variety of people that they have been kidnapped by UFOs and subjected to various sorts of examination and manipulation by the aliens. Though Mr. Jacobs believes the abduction phenomenon is as real as UFOs themselves, he does not, like many people, view interstellar travelers optimistically. In fact, he believes they represent an imminent catastrophe for the human race.

The bulk of Mr. Jacobs' book is devoted to analyzing the nature of the aliens and their purposes, as inferred from accounts of abductions by the abductees under a form of hypnosis. His treatment of the obvious evidentiary problems—the possibility of fantasies and false memories—is sober, and the sheer volume of the reports he has collected and the clear patterns that he claims to discern from the stories have convinced him that the abductions are really taking place.

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), that is not enough. Jacobs' statements to the contrary, there seems to be virtually no reliable physical evidence or documentation of either UFOs or abductions. Although some abductees, he reports, have been "taken" as many as eight times a year, there apparently have been no serious or concerted efforts to observe or record the abductions. If these really occur—and occur so frequently to the same people—why can't a team of researchers arrange to witness or film the experience (let alone try to stop it), and why can't neighbors or others in the vicinity confirm the abductees' unexplained absences? Mr. Jacobs says the latter has happened, but the one instance of it he offers is not convincing.

One standard objection to the reality of UFOs is that interstellar distances and the time required to travel to Earth from another solar system are prohibitive, but that argument does not take into account an alien physiological and psychological nature that is presumably radically different from that of humans. If, perhaps, the aliens have life spans of several hundred years, they might not mind spending a few decades zipping across the stars. But the aliens in Mr. Jacobs' book are, psychologically speaking, remarkably human: they exhibit anger, annoyance, humor, boredom, and even something like love. Their emotional resemblance to humans only makes their objective existence more problematic. But most of all, in Mr. Jacobs' account, they show deceitfulness.

The aliens' mission, he has concluded, is entirely self-serving, despite their pretenses to the contrary. The purpose of the abductions is to impregnate human females with alien hybrid embryos, which are then raised to adulthood and infiltrated among the terrestrial population. (The way this program supposedly works, however, also raises doubts about the veracity of the abduction reports. Given the advanced technologies at the aliens' fingertips—assuming they have fingertips—it is rather remarkable that they can't just synthesize humanoid creatures from scratch instead of having to rely on old-fashioned sex with human females to breed hybrids.) In any case, the alien program—"the threat" of Mr. Jacobs' title—is ominous. The aliens are very concerned about the welfare and future of the planet, but Mr. Jacobs notes that it is strange they never express any concern for the welfare and future of mankind.

According to the author, the aliens see no future for mankind. What they want is the planet itself and perhaps those few humans lucky enough to have been used as breeders. The breeding program, he claims, has been going on for some decades and is now reaching its culmination. "The Change," as he and his abductees call it, is coming very soon. Some say as soon as 1999, though Mr. Jacobs thinks it could be any time within the next five years to the next two generations. "The insectlike aliens will be in complete control. There will be no necessity to continue national governments. There will be 'one system' and 'one goal.'" Of course, even without the aliens, insectlike or otherwise, that seems to be happening.

Mr. Jacobs' pessimism is actually refreshing. For years, space aliens in fictional and even supposedly factual accounts have been used to push pet political agendas or debunk social and political institutions, the assumption being always that the aliens are not only smarter but far, far wiser and more benevolent than we are. Mr. Jacobs doesn't doubt their smarts, but he is right—if we grant the factuality of the abductees' accounts—to question their intentions toward mankind. A species that goes around kidnapping, raping and impregnating, and psychologically harming human beings against their will is not friendly. Oddly, Mr. Jacobs seems to be one of the few researchers who accepts the reality of abductions to have reached this conclusion, though it is a fairly obvious one.

Despite flaws in the logic that underlies his conviction, Mr. Jacobs is clearly a sober man and a serious student. But a phenomenon as bizarre and as threatening as he describes requires a good deal more material substantiation than what he offers; abduction, if it is real and as threatening as he claims, deserves more efforts at substantiation than either he or anyone else seems interested in providing.

Samuel Francis is a contributing editor to Chronicles *and author, most recently, of* Revolution from the Middle *(Middle American Press).*

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by Samuel Francis

Abraham the Unready

(This column is based in part on an address delivered at a "Colloquium on Lincoln, Reagan, and National Greatness" sponsored by the Claremont Institute in Washington, D.C., on February 12, 1998.)

L'affaire Lewinsky was the obsession of the headlines and conversations of Washington throughout February, obscuring even the jolliness promised by another airborne stomping of Iraq and the possible obliteration of the American economy by the Asian stock market crash. All through the month, one *femme* after another seeped from the woodwork of the Clinton administration—not only the lovely and talented Monica but also her mother, her literary agent, her friend Mrs. Tripp, the president's secretary, the elusive Miss Willey, the interminable Paula Jones, and, of course, the fat-mouthed First Lady herself, who on national television fabricated fantastic conspiracy theories to preserve her husband's office and the illusion of a normal marriage a few days longer. On top of these eruptions came Mrs. Albright bellowing for blowing Saddam Hussein out of his combat boots, the solemn Janet Reno, and the giggly Donna Shalala. Never in American history has John Knox's horrid regiment of women waxed so prominent and so vocal, and all that was missing was former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders haranguing the public on the virtues of tutoring pre-schoolers in bondage fantasies.

One would have thought the public, even without Dr. Elders, would at last have had enough, but according to opinion polls they only craved more. The president's popularity not only survived but appeared to flourish, and even those who said they believed he had an affair with the former intern also reported that, as long as the stock market held, they didn't much care. How is it that we have come to this sad passage in the history of the nation and its president? Is it too far-fetched to suggest that the indifference of the American people to the moral character of the chief executive is in fact the chief legacy of Abraham Lincoln?

In a recent article in *Chronicles*, I characterized Lincoln as not only not a great President but "an ill-prepared man who has a strong claim to being the most incompetent President in American history." Yet, despite his incompetence and the immediate disasters his administration wreaked on those Americans who had the misfortune to live (and those who did not succeed in living) through it, he did leave an important legacy that is not unconnected to the present contentment with the present occupant of Lincoln's office that a majority of Americans seem to harbor.

Of the 15 Presidents who preceded Lincoln in the White House, Lincoln enjoyed less preparation for high office than any. He had served in the militia during the Black Hawk War but saw no action; he served only one term as a congressman and four as a state legislator. By 1860, he had twice run for the U.S. Senate and had been defeated both times. In the same year, nominated as the candidate of a new splinter party widely regarded as eccentric if not extremist, he was elected to the White House as a fluke, because of the split within the Democratic Party, with less than 40 percent of the popular vote. It is quite true that Lincoln was a skilled local politician and that he had become a prominent lawyer in Illinois, but he was not a nationally known lawyer, and most of his cases seem to have been rather ordinary ones.

In fact, Abraham Lincoln displayed all his life the world view of a small-town politico, and it was the immediate source of the disaster of his administration that he carried this mentality into the White House at the greatest crisis in American history.

Lincoln's small-town political mentality is clear in the period between his election and his bungled resolution of the Fort Sumter crisis. Lincoln simply could not bring himself to believe that Southerners felt strongly enough about the issues that animated them to secede; he was temperamentally unable to recognize that some people engage in politics for reasons of high principle and do not regard politics merely as a bottomless bucket of patronage.

Those who heard Lincoln talk about secession during this period confirm that, once Lincoln was inaugurated, it was to dispensing patronage that he devoted his immediate and almost total attention, despite the formation of the Confederacy and the looming specter of Ft. Sumter. His most recent biographer, David Donald, recounts how "The new President allowed office-seekers to take up most of his time. From nine o'clock in the morning until late at night, his White House office was open to all comers, and sometimes the petitioners were so numerous that it was impossible to climb the stairs." Indeed, when Charles Francis Adams, recently appointed ambassador to Great Britain by the administration, came to the White House with Seward to thank Lincoln and expected to discuss Anglo-American diplomacy at a critical moment when it was imperative for the Union to prevent British recognition of the Confederacy, Lincoln showed no interest. He dismissed him with the rude remark, "Very kind of you to say so, Mr. Adams, but you are not my choice. You are Seward's man," and he changed the subject to what he was really interested in: "Well, Seward, I have settled the Chicago Post Office."

Lincoln betrayed no indication of what he planned to do about the crisis of the Union that confronted him by the time of his inauguration, the secession of seven states and the formation of the Confederate government. He repeatedly insisted that neither he nor his party had any intention of interfering with slavery as it legally existed and that his sole purpose was to preserve the Union. Yet, given that goal, he issued no statement after his election or his inauguration that made clear what he would do. Had he done so, his statement could have meant crucial support for Southern Unionists and avoidance of war.

Throughout the crisis Lincoln took his stand on formalities and evasions—that as President-elect he had no authority, that compromise proposals were only efforts to subvert the Constitution or compromise with revolutionaries, that any meeting with Confederate representatives would imply recognition of Con-

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federate independence and the right of secession. Technically, he may have been correct in some of these claims, but his insistence on them in the face of the dissolution of the Union and the prospect of war and at a time when even radicals on both sides were suggesting compromises reveals his mediocrity as a national political leader. Seward, Adams, Sen. Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, Sen. John Crittenden of Kentucky, and the Virginia legislature all advocated or offered compromises, as did commissioners from the Confederacy, but Lincoln rejected them out of hand or ignored them.

When he first polled his Cabinet about re-provisioning Fort Sumter, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Interior advised against it. Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase advised against it if it would mean war. Winfield Scott warned him that it would mean secession of the Upper South and that Sumter could not be reinforced without a major military and naval commitment. Both Stephen Douglas and Horace Greeley also favored evacuating the fort.

And yet he decided at last to re-provision it. His decision to do so was the greatest single blunder in American history, since it clearly invited and virtually forced the Confederacy to fire on the fort and allowed Lincoln to call for 75,000 troops in response. His call for troops in turn provoked the secession of the Upper South and the completion of the Confederacy, including the secession of Virginia. It allowed the Confederacy to add immeasurably to its own strength, placed its borders adjacent to Washington itself, and gave the South its greatest military commanders, Lee and Jackson.

While Lincoln insisted on formalities and legalisms when confronted by the secession crisis, he showed no such punctiliousness when dealing with Southern sympathizers in the North or with border states. The man who could not risk a meeting with Confederate commissioners because it might imply recognition of the Confederacy had no problem with illegally suspending habeas corpus, allowing the arbitrary incarceration of political opponents, and using federal troops to prevent secession of the border states, nor did the champion of perpetual unionism have much problem with the secession of West Virginia from its parent state. "The next years," writes Professor Donald, "would see greater infringements on individual liberties than in any other period of American history."

The result of his blunder was the self-inflicted genocide of the Civil War, and instead of accomplishing his stated goal, the preservation of the Union, he caused its mortal wounding. What kind of "Union" is it when half of it is forced back into it at the cost of military devastation and conquest, and much of the remainder has to be held under martial law and the suspension of civil liberties?

I do not argue that Lincoln's course of conduct or his language was deliberately deceptive, that he intended all along to provoke war, overthrow the Constitution, and make himself dictator in a Caesarian grab for power. But the character that emerges from his conduct remains that of a small-town politico, more concerned with the spoils of office and the cadging of votes than with the interests of the nation, and too inexperienced and poorly educated to meet the challenges his office demanded. He is simply the classic case of the Peter Principle—a man promoted beyond the level of his competence.

Nor do I believe that he ever intended to re-found the American political order along lines radically different from what it was as he found it. Lincoln subscribed to a fairly conventional Whig nationalism, as conventional as it was questionable from a constitutional and historical viewpoint, but nonetheless useful for what he considered the great practical object of government, the encouragement of economic affluence. His doctrine of equality was intended to justify that role of government. "On the side of the Union," he told Congress in his message of July 4, 1861, the war "is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men—to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford men an unfettered start, and a fair chance in the race of life." As Harry Jaffa has put it, "The principle of Equality, far from enfranchising any leveling action of government, is the ground for the recognition of those human differences which arose *naturally*, but in *civil society*, when human industry and acquisitiveness are emancipated." I do not agree that the principle of equality does not enfranchise leveling—the very lifting of "artificial weights" by the state is itself a process of leveling—but it does serve to justify the egalitarian scramble for wealth, and in Lincoln's mind its purpose was exactly that.

But Lincoln failed to see the flaws of such a theory or where it would lead—to the unlimited expansion of centralized state power, the destruction of the power and authority of the states, the death blow to the Old Republic, and the enthronement of Economic Man as the *summum bonum* of human endeavor. Both the late M.E. Bradford and liberal historian James McPherson rightly see Lincoln as the godfather of the "fundamental transformation of the relationship between power and liberty" that the war brought. The result was the launching of the federal leviathan on the course it has followed ever since. The political and plutocratic corruption of the late 19th century and the eventual marriage of plutocrat and bureaucrat in the modern managerial state of our own day are Lincoln's legacy, whether he intended them or not.

The ethic of acquisitive scramble and the politics of a leviathan state busying itself with the systematic removal of "artificial weights" that impede acquisition are today the common bond that most mainstream conservatives share with the general public, and it is the only ethic that remains accessible to most Americans of any persuasion or social stratum. The moral reflexes that demand at least the appearance of integrity and sobriety in public leaders are themselves "artificial weights" from which the Lincolnian leviathan is committed to emancipating us. Today, conservatives who are still animated by such reflexes gaze in dismay as an American public expresses indifference to the moral conduct of the chief executive and praises him for his successful management of the economy. In February, the *Wall Street Journal* quoted a citizen of Illinois, the "Land of Lincoln," who angrily retorted to its reporter, "Don't tell us that we have a bad guy in [the White House]. We can see for ourselves that things are better," and her husband added in agreement, "He has kept up the economy." Why should we be surprised that the triumph of Economic Man results in indifference to and denial of the moral degradation of the presidency and the nation it serves? It was Abraham Lincoln, wittingly or not, who put us on the path to where we are today.

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Letter From Rome

by Andrei Navrozov

Nothing Better to Do

◆

I have always wanted to spend some time in Rome, for a whole rosary of personal reasons. As with much else in a person's private life, to recount these in print is to expose oneself to public ridicule. Yes, Rome is a wonderful city. Yes, the food is good.

But then in England, where I live, the new Labour government came in to finish what the Tories started. And since another famous fact about Rome is that it has already fallen, I figured that over here my chances of being buried under the Eurorubble were encouragingly smaller. So I moved. Days are now passing like centuries outside my window, to the ringing of church bells and the flashing of Japanese cameras.

The paramount joy in all this is a newfound superficiality. On my terrace, in the suggestively Decembrist sunshine, I have been reading a collection of Russian memoirs from the 1830's. How people knew and valued their cities in those days—Petersburg, Moscow—how well they described every facade, every little bridge they had known since childhood! And of course we have all read such memoirs of London, of Paris, of Vienna, even of New York or San Francisco, written by the natural or adoptive children of those cities with the same tenderness, the same observant devotion.

This, alas, is no longer possible. To know a great city like London or Rome nowadays, to know it by heart and in depth and over the span of a lifetime, is to sustain an emotional injury that would render a sensible man all but mute with indignation and shame. Only a giddy foreigner, a pliant, impressionable, superficial stranger, is ignorant enough not to taste the anti-oxidizing agent in his bottle of bubbly *prosecco*; nor has he met enough cranky old-timers to acquire their inevitable bitterness. He knows nothing of the way things used to be 50, 20, even ten years back. To him, everything is the real thing.

"The knowledge that the world is ending," wrote a Russian writer in the 1920's, "is what distinguishes an individual from a philistine." In retrospect I am beginning to think that this leave of absence from London, a place which during the last 13 years I had learned to use and to love like the great library it is, was really a convoluted means of getting a few months' respite from living the life of an individual.

Of all the countries I have ever visited, Italy is the only place where one can live like a philistine without wearing trainers, reading the *International Herald Tribune*, or degenerating into an animal in other ways. One look in the dining room of a middle-of-the-road hotel anywhere in Europe will remind us that, at the moment of pouring anemic, bluish milk over their bowls of high-fiber cereal, middle-class Swedish, French, or Belgian families look exactly alike; that is to say, they look American. They are ready for life in the United States of Europe, where everything will be "better and more fun," as their predecessors in interest used to sing, not always tunefully, aboard eastbound cattle trains.

By contrast, in Italy, philistine life is possessed of an aesthetic so richly ritualized that a Roman pharmacy owner on a week's skiing holiday with his family in Cortina d'Ampezzo will be mistaken for a serious nobleman among serious noblemen. Neither he nor his wife will go skiing, of course; hauteur, like couture, will not be ruffled by rude Teutonic winds; instead, they will join the carefully timed round of cocktails and promenades that exhibit their exquisite, almost hypochondriac idleness, his languid wit, and her new furs to fine advantage.

Admittedly the weight of tradition is responsible. The Italian bourgeois had begun to promenade when the aristocracy still fenced and boxed. Now that the middle classes of the world have united, under the colors of Benetton, in Americanism—sport, most conspicuously, and all the attendant trappings of the sporting life—the Italian is the odd man out. His vision of the active life may be centered on the English country house of a century ago, but unlike Ralph Lauren he never ran and sweated to get there in one generation. To the contrary, the Italian simply promenaded until every bourgeois around him turned *gentilhomme*, and now he promenades among them like a great aristocratic original. None of which, incidentally, has deterred Benetton from selling the Brooklyn Bridge to Brooklyn, or at least Brooklyn Heights.

Apart from tradition, which has saved the Italians from the embarrassment of ending up like everyone else, another powerful characteristic that humanizes their middle class is a kind of seriousness, a seriousness which at times resembles cheerfulness and at times cheerful resignation. I have already alluded to the image of life which the Americanist set all over the world holds up as a banner of progress, and I allude to it again in this connection. The familiar strangeness of seeing, on the No. 22 bus in central London, a young woman wearing a track suit or a Walkman is explained by the conjecture that she does not enjoy being on the No. 22, indeed that riding it is only a transitory phase of her existence, and that she would gladly swap this for a run in the park or an evening at the local discotheque. Looking around, one may note that just about everyone else on the bus, including the driver and the conductor, shares her anxiety and her sense of displacement.

What is it with people? From the exodus of the Jews from Egypt to a Sotheby's drinks party, everybody wants to be somewhere, if not something, else. You are talking to an old stupid woman with a glass of champagne in her trembling hand, you think you are being polite as a boy scout, you suppose the woman is grateful for the attention, but no! You catch her eyeing the door through which a famous used-car salesman is entering, and before you can murmur something suitable ("Madam, is it not time, now that you are in the frosty autumn of your life, to be thinking of higher things?") she is off like a shot. And for the stupid old woman of the parable, read "everyman," read baker and banker, newspaper editor and lover, bootblack and writer.

A scene of this kind, which is routine in New York, Rockford, or Paris, is almost unobservable in Rome and hilariously inconceivable in a provincial town of Italy. Of course I would not say under oath that there are no waitresses here who are actually critically acclaimed ac-

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tresses, and no taxi drivers who have had series pilots produced. But what one observes emanating from each individual soul is extreme, almost sacramental seriousness with respect to its predicament at this or that given moment in time. Until it became the mark of the bourgeois, this solemn self-satisfaction used to belong to no particular social group and marked equally the upper and the lower classes throughout Europe. A German grain merchant (see Thomas Mann), a Russian nobleman (see Tolstoy), and an English orphan (see Dickens) all saw their position in the world as reasonably convincing, reasonably convenient, and reasonably permanent. The main exceptions were poets, men with bad gambling debts, and Hans Christian Andersen's little mermaid—all tragic and romantic and worthy, yes, but not 99.9 percent of the population, either.

What I am trying to say is that the seriousness of the Italian way of life, its solemn ritualism and its cheerful acceptance, now accounts for the incredible fact that only in Italy will one see a mother nursing her child or a beggar begging alms or a butcher slicing meat "as if they had nothing better to do." They don't, and in the world as it is today, this is a miracle well worth watching.

Andrei Navrozov, formerly Chronicles' *poetry editor and London correspondent, is now* Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Letter From Alabama

by Michael Hill

The League Replies

◆

Dr. Samuel Francis describes secession as an "infantile disorder" and casts The League of the South in the role of Margaret Mitchell's impetous Stuart Tarleton in contrast to the part he imagines he is playing—the cool, rational Rhett Butler. But if Dr. Francis had bothered to read the League's literature, he would have learned that, while we honor our Southern ancestors and believe they were right in leaving the Union in 1860-61, we do not dwell in the past. We look to a future in which all Americans will be free from the intrusion of the Leviathan state. And we don't hate all "Yankees"; in fact, the League has chapters in 27 states and members in 48. When we use the term "Yankee" perjoratively, we speak of the smug, self-righteous attitude that still exists toward Southerners in some places above the Mason-Dixon Line and of a government whose questionable lineage began with Appomattox. The Yankee government, and not the Northerner, is the target of our criticism.

Secession, as Dr. Francis has admitted, is a legal recourse against tyranny. Moreover, he concedes that the South in 1860 "had an arguable case for separation" in order to protect its economic interests. However, he sees the situation as radically different today because the South has been the recipient of so much federal largesse. While it is true that the South has received more federal dollars than it has paid out in taxes, this does not mean that the region's interests have been advanced by the government in Washington. It is not too difficult to buy off most of the current crop of "Bill Clinton is no Jeff Davis" politicians in Dixie, but in the South there are still millions of decent, honest Americans who deplore the golden chains of dependency with which the central state has bound them.

One of the dirty little secrets of American politics is that, over the past 30 years, the South's congressmen and Senators in Washington have been consistently outvoted on issues such as abortion, gun control, immigration, and racial quotas. Conservative Southerners realize that these enormities have been forced down their throats by the very same Solons who supposedly represent Dr. Francis's Middle American Radicals.

I continue to admire Dr. Francis for his outspokenness on the issue of immigration. However, he is mistaken when he points to a demographic future of the South in which white Southerners will be a minority except in a few areas of the interior uplands. This future is likely to become reality only if the national government is allowed to continue its current open-door policy.

In criticizing the League of the South and its belief that secession should be viewed as a viable option for all states—not just Southern ones—bedeviled by an intrusive federal government, Dr. Francis reveals himself as an arch-nationalist intent on saving the whole of America. Battened on a steady diet of Antonio Gramsci and assorted leftist thinkers, Francis apparently believes that a nation lost to the liberal-socialist "Great March" through its institutions must be reconquered in the same manner. Perhaps it could be, if we only had the luxury of time. But already, as mentioned above, the golden door beckoning Third World immigrants has been knocked clean off its hinges, and it would be naive to think that the elites in Washington and Manhattan will bow to the demands of Francis's Middle American constituency.

Middle American nationalism, according to Francis, is the key to "resisting the domination of the ruling class and its antiwhite and anti-Western allies in the underclass." If such a successful resistance could be mounted, the resulting state of affairs would indeed be desirable. Breaking the stranglehold of the elite-underclass alliance should be the right's first order of business; success would mean a rebirth of American independence. But is Francis's vision realistic?

Obviously, Dr. Francis and I disagree on the means, not the end: liberty and self-government. Since its inception in 1994, The League of the South has stood firmly for Southern independence. Our position is based on the fact that the South has always been a "nation" in the historical and Biblical sense: a people with a distinct religious and cultural identity. Independence, as the League's leaders have said repeatedly, can be achieved by restoring the federal Constitution complete with the 10th Amendment's guarantee of the rights of the states. In practical terms, the League's members support every measure that would bring about a Constitutional restitution. If such efforts fail, then it will be up to the states themselves (not to an organization) to determine their future relationship to the union. It is not the League that is seeking to break up the union but the various ethnic revenge movements—Latino, black, *and* white. Indeed, Dr. Francis has lectured to groups that have indulged in ill-considered discussions of ethnic separatism. He had better save his unionist rhetoric for racialist organizations that are promoting both ethnic antagonisms and hatred for the Christian religion that serves to unify rather than to divide Americans of good will.

Michael Hill is the president of The League of the South.

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PUBLISHING

The Life and Times of the King Plagiarism Story

by Theodore Pappas

Three death threats, one left hook to the jaw, 40 rejections from 40 publishers in 40 months, and a sold-out first edition. Such was the response to my 1994 book, *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Plagiarism Story*.

Chronicles and I first became interested in this story in mid-1990, when we heard 1) that a university had threatened to block a scholar's bid for tenure if he followed through with his plans to discuss King's plagiarisms, and 2) that the National Endowment for the Humanities, which has allocated more than a million dollars of the taxpayers' money to the King Papers Project, had long known about King's plagiarisms but had yet to pressure Clayborne Carson, editor of the project, for a prompt disclosure of the evidence. As we later learned, NEH Director Lynne Cheney was not obligated to inform the public about these findings . . . and she didn't.

What quickly became clear is that this story had less to do with King and his legacy, with what he did or did not do, than with larger cultural issues, such as the politicization of the academy, the ethics of the press, our obsession with multiculturalism and diversity, and the sorry state of American publishing—magazine, newspaper, and book publishing alike.

This last aspect of the story begins not in America but in England, where a semblance of free speech and open debate still exists. On December 3, 1989, Frank Johnson, the current editor of the London *Spectator* but then a columnist for the London *Sunday Telegraph*, published a short article entitled, "Martin Luther King, Jr.—Was He a Plagiarist?" As Johnson reported, "Researchers in his native Georgia must soon decide whether to reveal that the late Dr. Martin Luther King, murdered in 1968, was—in addition to his other human failings—a plagiarist. There is now much doubt as to whether his Ph.D. thesis was really his own work." Most interesting was Johnson's jab at America: "[This] story has not yet been published in the United States."

Despite Johnson's prodding, the American news media treated the King plagiarism story like the plague. Rumors of King's plagiarisms continued to circulate in academic circles and a few right-wing journals through mid-1990, but there remained no actual evidence of King's plagiarisms nor any acknowledgment of the story by the scholarly community, the mainstream American press, or the National Endowment for the Humanities; an explosive story seemed to have died aborning. But all this changed when *Chronicles*' editor Thomas Fleming briefly referred to King's plagiarisms in his September 1990 article "Revolution and Tradition in the Humanities Curriculum": "The 'Doctor' should now be understood as strictly a courtesy title, since King, it has been recently revealed, apparently plagiarized his Boston University doctoral dissertation." This was the first mention of King's plagiarisms in the American press to garner national attention and the ire of Boston University, whose acting president, Jon Westling, sent us a letter to the editor claiming that King's B.U. dissertation had been "scrupulously examined and reexamined" and that "not a single reader has ever found any nonattributed or misattributed quotations, misleading paraphrases, or thoughts borrowed without due scholarly reference in any of its 343 pages." It was in response to Mr. Westling's letter that I wrote, for our January 1991 issue, "A Doctor In Spite of Himself: The Strange Career of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Dissertation." This was the first article to expose, with parallel quotations, the extent and blatancy of King's pilfering.

The national news blackout on this story ended two weeks after we had gone to press with my story, when the *Wall Street Journal* heard that the story was breaking and published a front-page article about King's plagiary on November 9, 1990. Every major newspaper and journal of opinion then followed with editorials about King's sleight of hand. What these publications did not admit is that many of them had long known about this story, and about the overwhelming nature of the evidence, but deliberately suppressed it. As Charles Babington later revealed in the *New Republic* ("Embargoed," January 28, 1991), the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*, and the *New Republic* itself all knew the facts of this story but refused to publish them. What Babington did not discuss is how, once the story broke, it was thoroughly whitewashed.

Take the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, for example. After the *Time*'s initial story about King's pilfering, it then softened the blow a few days later with a puff-ball editorial pooh-poohing the controversy. After all, it editorialized, John Kennedy had his Theodore Sorensen, George Bush his Peggy Noonan—as if taking someone's work without permission and then claiming it as your own is somehow equivalent to the work of a paid speechwriter. The *Wall Street Journal*'s backpedaling was even more embarrassing. The *Journal* reported the plagiarism on November 9, ran a November 15 editorial that says King's plagiary does not so much reflect on the character of King as it "tells something about the rest of us," and then published a January 21 editorial by a Professor George McLean that praised King's plagiarized dissertation as "a contribution in scholarship for which his doctorate was richly deserved." Now, one may not want to strip King of his title of "doctor" at this late date, but to say that his doctorate was "richly deserved" on the very basis of his thoroughly plagiarized dissertation (66 percent of the thesis, in fact) is absurd and dishonest.

The *Journal*'s pathetic coverage of this story did not go unnoticed by the London *Sunday Telegraph*, which reported: "Such is the cravenness of the U.S. media when it comes to race that no newspaper followed [our December 1989] story, until Friday. Then, in an article full of apologetic, mealy-mouthed phrases, the *Wall Street Journal* confirmed our

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findings." But perhaps the *Journal*'s cravenness should not have surprised us. After all, the *Journal* tipped its hand in its November 15 editorial, when it stressed the importance of covering this story in a "carefully modulated" manner.

"Carefully modulated" is perhaps the best way to describe the book industry's approach to this story. Clayborne Carson's volumes of King's papers—in which the evidence of King's plagiary is exhaustively presented but where Carson still claims that King's "borrowing" only constitutes theft if we use "a strict definition of plagiarism," and that there is still no "definite answer to the question whether King deliberately violated the standards that applied to him as a student"—have been widely reviewed and praised. And Keith Miller's 1992 book, *Voice of Deliverance: The Language of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Its Sources*—in which the plagiarisms of King and of other minorities are discounted as "voice merging," a cultural habit derivative of oral traditions to which the majority culture must learn to be sensitive—is today cited as the final word on this matter. Our public library here in Rockford, for example, at one time had *four* copies of Miller's faux scholarship.

What the publishing industry refuses to tolerate is any honest discussion of King's plagiary and of the literary chicanery of our leading intellectuals, political pundits, and media darlings, from Christopher Hitchens to William Bennett. Regarding the 40 publishers who rejected my book and my new edition, three of them said a study critical of any aspect of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life or work would be in "bad taste," because "King isn't around to defend himself." When I replied that this absurd standard would mean the end of historical studies and of scholarship in general—that this standard has not hindered the rise of our new national pastime, defaming Thomas Jefferson—I not only received no responses but in one case even got my letter back stamped, "Return to Sender"—the publisher had not even opened it. A handful of publishers said, "Great book, we're definitely interested, now just give equal time to the other side of the story." By "equal time" they meant a nonjudgmental discussion of the "voice merging" bilge. According to this standard, no writer could praise free trade without also praising tariffs and protectionism.

Killing debate, stifling discussion, and smothering any hint of free thinking that might disturb the verbal industries and their manufacturing of public truth—this is what American book publishing so often accomplishes today. The "reader's recommendation" of one publisher gave away the game: "I recommend against publishing this book, because such honesty and truth-telling could only be destructive."

Other publishers wrote off this book as a right-wing screed, even though my most vocal critics have issued from the right: meaning neoconservatives, who tolerate no criticism of King, no matter how tempered or just, because King is the founding father of their breed of conservatism; and white racists, who were disappointed to discover that this book was not the down-and-dirty dose of King-bashing that they expected. In fact, the leading "conservative" academic publisher today rejected this book because I failed to sing the virtues of the civil rights movement. When I replied that the book's subject was plagiarism and cultural standards and not the civil rights movement, whatever the latter's virtues, he replied, "It doesn't matter what your purpose is."

Concerning the death threats, only one of them was memorable, and only memorable for its tackiness: it was left on my answering machine on the morning of my wedding. Regarding the left hook to my jaw, thrown by an inebriated critic who recognized me from an interview then running on the barroom TV—it missed.

But spiking stories, suppressing books, and issuing death threats against writers who refuse to toe the politically correct line (Professor David Hackett Fischer of Brandeis University received several death threats, one complete with footnotes, in the wake of *Albion's Seed*, published in 1989) may no longer be necessary if the King family's approach to intellectual property rights becomes widely accepted. In January 1997, the King family signed a deal with Time-Warner and Intellectual Properties Management (IPM) to produce and market new books of King's writings, memoirs by family members, recordings and CD-ROM's of King's speeches, and a King-related Internet site; the deal will reportedly net the cash-strapped King estate $30-$50 million within five years.

At the heart of the deal is an aggressive enforcement of the hundreds of copyrights that King placed on "his" writings, on his most famous speeches in particular. Most disturbing, especially to the black community, has been the King family's aggressive profiteering toward those wanting to praise King by quoting the "I Have a Dream" speech. When *USA Today* quoted the speech in praise of King in 1993, the King estate sued; the newspaper had to pay a $1,700 licensing fee plus legal costs. When CBS simply reran its original news footage of King giving the "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington in 1963 as part of its five-part video documentary called "The 20th Century With Mike Wallace," the King estate also sued.

But it is not just corporate giants who have been hassled and hindered in their attempt to celebrate the King legacy. When a newspaper editor in Lexington, Kentucky, wanted to honor King by printing one of his speeches from 1965, IPM made him jump through hoops to gain permission. The editor's ordeal, according to David Garrow's account of it in the *Washington Post* ("Are They Stifling the Work of Martin Luther King, Jr.?" January 28, 1997), was "long and frustrating." "Despite an express-delivery letter and phone calls, he could not get a timely answer; only at the last minute did his newspaper receive approval to reprint the speech."

To make matters worse, once permission is granted to reprint King's work, the fees charged by the King estate are also often excessive. Richard Lischer, a professor of divinity at Duke University, told the *New York Times* that his book *The Preacher King* (1995) was delayed for a whole year while "the [King] estate's literary agent reviewed the manuscript for copyright violations." Moreover, "I thought their demands for payment for quotations in a serious study of King were excessive." So reportedly were the fees charged Julian Bond for reprinting four documents in his 824-page textbook on civil rights. "The book costs 65 bucks, and the publisher told me those documents put the price up 10 or 15 dollars a book. . . . I was prepared to pay something. It just seemed to me an unreasonable charge." Philip Jones of IPM agreed, saying the fees charged Bond, in a deal struck before the King family had hired IPM, were indeed exorbitant. Taylor Branch, a Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer of King, was even more candid. As he reportedly told the *Daily Report* of Fulton County, Georgia, scholarship "would grind to a halt" if the King fami-

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ly's approach to intellectual property rights became accepted practice.

Mr. Branch is right: by delaying publishing projects with excessive red tape, or by derailing them altogether with exorbitant fees, the King estate can in effect stymie scholarship and censor history by controlling who receives permission to comment on King and his work. This danger was not lost on David Garrow, a frequent critic of the King family. As he wrote in the *Post*:

> How will new students of King's life, especially young people, react to the meaning of a man whose year-2000 image may be heavily colorized—or perhaps bleached—by Time-Warner's corporate image specialists? . . . Consider the possibility of a scholar whose analyses of King—or anything else—anger or offend the King estate. . . . Could permission to quote from King's materials be withheld, or the price made high enough to alone block publication?

As a case in point, Garrow highlights the ostensible about-face of Taylor Branch, who after meeting with the King family then "declined to expand" on his previous public criticisms of the King estate. "Branch may or may not have changed his views," writes Garrow, "but the leverage that IPM's stance gives the King estate over writers who specialize in King could well inhibit them from speaking out fully and frankly about their concerns regarding the King family, the King Center and the King estate."

Of course, what is overlooked in all of this is the irony: the King estate now enforces copyrights and demands exorbitant royalties on work which King often stole in the first place. In a just world, the royalties would go to the estates of Jack Boozer, Archibald Carey, Paul Tillich, and to the scores of other writers, ministers, scholars, and social activists whose work fell prey to King's "voice merging." Irony, it seems, is just another of the many things to which we have to be sensitive.

Theodore Pappas is the managing editor of Chronicles. *This article is excerpted from his new book,* Plagiarism and the Culture War: The Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Other Prominent Americans *(Hallberg Publishing Corporation).*

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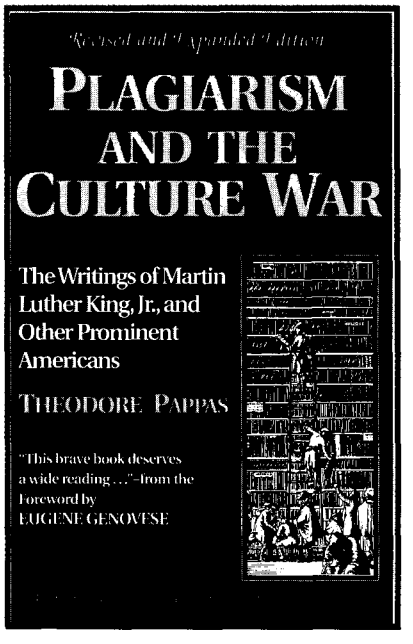
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MEDIA

Return of the Alehouse

by Jesse Walker

We are, they say, entering an age of New Media, of talk radio, desktop publishing, and the World Wide Web. Not everyone in the old media is pleased. "The new media cater to and are built up by people who used to sit on bar stools and complain to each other," declared NBC correspondent Gwen Ifill in 1994. "Now they can dial an 800 number and complain for free." Ifill speaks for a lot of her colleagues. She's also more right than she realizes. The "new" media are directly descended from the original media of taverns, bars, and cafés; of songs and rumors, graffiti and wall posters, broadsheets and fliers. In July 1646, an Ifillesque British preacher warned Parliament that alehouses were "the meeting places of malignants and sectaries." Naturally, the government periodically cracked down on unlicensed taverns.

We still have bars, and they still transmit information. (It is often said that the virtue of the *Drudge Report*, Matt Drudge's controversial on-line publication, is that it allows Americans outside the Beltway to find out what Washington journalists are gossiping about in their fashionable D.C. watering holes.) But we also have mass media—a tight web of TV networks, newspaper chains, and mass-market magazines that together constitute "the press." And frankly, it's overshadowed the old order of taverns and fliers. This century has professionalized journalism, erecting walls between Real Reporters and Everyone Else. Real Reporting occurs only in certain places (even if Matt Drudge deserved a Pulitzer, he'd never get one) and includes only certain kinds of journalism (Hunter Thompson won't get one either). It rests on a professional code, too, excluding certain behaviors and making it possible to suspend or expel transgressors from the priesthood.

The advantage to all this is that it keeps out a lot of inaccurate, biased, or otherwise discreditable reporting. The disadvantage is that it also *allows* a lot of inaccurate, biased, or otherwise discreditable reporting, as long as it conforms to the myths and biases the profession holds dear. (Objectivity may be a worthy goal, but objective language can cloak a lot of ideological assumptions.) Furthermore, it excludes a lot of worthy material, turning away pieces in which the author mixes his opinions too liberally with his data or expresses himself in language unshackled from the profession's clichés.

The new media combine the raucousness of the tavern with the reach of the press; they contain everything the old media do not. They pursue stories the *New York Times* won't touch—and they get more of them wrong. They allow more good writing—and more writing that's bad. They are more honest about their biases—and more biased, period. They are unprofessional in every sense of the word. And they're growing.

The Internet. The Net is the new media's nervous system, the place where anyone who wants can be a writer, editor, and publisher. It was originally a Pentagon project, a communication system designed to keep functioning in a nuclear war: one site could go down, but the system would survive. Over the years, as the network spread to more sites and computers became cheaper and easier to use, its original purpose was lost, or buried. The best metaphor for what happened may be a Third World land invasion, in which the propertyless poor descend *en masse* upon unused territory and claim it as their own—except that what happened to the Net was far more gradual and far less intentional. Soon, large portions of the Internet weren't even part of the old government infrastructure: independent commercial networks emerged, like illicit add-ons to a house, allowing entrepreneurs to bypass old restrictions on on-line commerce. Since 1995, all Net traffic has gone through private channels.

Now we can subscribe to publications that exist only on e-mail or the World Wide Web. Or we can take part in discussion lists, some private and some open to all, on obscure academic subjects, political ideas of the "kook" left and right, or simple hobbies and fan passions. There's more garbage on the Net than words can express—for proof, visit any "chatroom"—but there's also a tremendous amount of interesting independent writing, a renaissance of pamphleteering. The Internet is dispersed, decentralized, and participatory, everything CBS and the *New York Times* are not.

All this is well-known. Indeed, one of the few things as aggravating as anti-Net cant is pro-Net cant, the mindless boosterism of certain on-line enthusiasts. Some strike a populist note, such as former Grateful Dead lyricist John Perry Barlow (who insists on describing the off-line world as "Terrestrial," as though the Web existed on Saturn) and George Gilder (who prefers mystical metaphors to Barlow's science fiction). They see the Net as qualitatively different from alehouses, as a new sort of network that's *impossible* to regulate, censor, or suppress. They're wrong, of course: the Internet may be resilient, but it's far from tamper-proof.

But at least their hearts are in the right place. Worse yet are those who exalt the Net but downplay the potential it offers for do-it-yourself culture. Even now, many media accounts of the Networked World To Come expect the early storm of personal websites and independent e-mail lists to subside, making way for a more controlled ethos of organized chatrooms, big commercial services, and movies on demand.

When Internet hype meets Internet hysteria, that's the vision that emerges. The Net is powerful, we learn, but dangerous. It's an amazing tool that we must keep away from the militiamen and pornographers. Let it thrive, but under the careful guidance of the government and responsible businesses. *Don't let it become a damn alehouse*!

Radio. Unfortunately, most discussion of talk radio has focused on Rush Limbaugh and his imitators. That crowd has certainly had a strong political impact, fueling the Republican victories of 1994 and helping slay the Clintons' health-care reforms. But while certainly important, such nationwide, celebrity-driven programming isn't nearly as participatory as the local shows that make up the meat of talk radio. Limbaugh is as much a part of the media establishment as the liberals he criticizes, even if he represents a brasher, more conservative wing of that elite.

Local shows vary widely in quality and ideological spin, but they have several things working for them that the national shows do not. They have a smaller audience, making it easier for listeners to get on the air and, thus, for dissenting voices to be heard. They can tackle a

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wider range of issues—something before Congress one day, something before city council the next. And they just don't have the *bulk* of the coast-to-coast programs. They have less to lose from covering something risky or obscure or from taking a controversial stand.

There are, of course, good syndicated shows. Most talk stations mix local and national shows. Many mix mainstream and radical opinions: with all those hours of the day to fill, all-talk stations are more likely to schedule something . . . well, *different*. There are a lot of folks with things to say, some of whom are even willing to pay for the airtime.

Beyond the A.M.-F.M. universe, shortwave radio carries everything from the crypto-Nazi fulminations of Tom Valentine to the leftist programs of the Costa Rica-based Radio For Peace International. And then there's micro radio: unlicensed stations of less than 100 watts, transmitting everything from sermons to socialism to ska. The micro movement makes room for everyone who's been excluded from the mainstream media monopoly. So on one hand, in Apache Junction, Arizona, you have KISS 89 FM, a station that may be illegal but nonetheless belongs to the local chamber of commerce, covers local politics, and broadcasts church services and high school sports. At the same time, you've got stations like Radio Mutiny in Philadelphia, an outlet that, to quote from its mission statement, "is rabidly non-hierarchical, decisively anti-authoritarian, avidly pro-feminist, staunchly anti-racist, and resolutely anti-homophobic." What do two such different stations have in common? Both have gotten word from the FCC in recent months, telling them to go off the air—or else.

Techie types have been talking up the idea of Web radio, of using RealAudio software to broadcast over the Internet. Such stations would not need to be licensed, and thousands of them could exist side-by-side. With current technology, it costs a lot to do this, and very few—no more than 50 or so—people can tune in at once. The futurists promise that this will soon change, once the programmers have perfected "multicasting" software. And in this case, the futurists are probably right.

But some stations are already using the Net, not to broadcast to a mass audience but to share shows. The A-Infos Radio Project has set up a website through which micro stations, legal community stations, and independent producers can upload and download news reports, full-length documentaries, and other programs. It's cheaper than satellites and faster than the mail, and you don't need a computer to listen to it.

Video. If the unofficial slogan of the old media is "trust us," the unofficial slogan of the new is "caveat emptor." Nowhere is this more true than in the booming world of low-budget independent video, a much-neglected world dominated by paranoids, pornographers (the medium's true pioneers, for better or worse), and enervating lecturers. It's like public-access TV without the production values.

You can't help but admire these filmmakers' spunk, putting together little movies at impossibly low budgets. And with a few exceptions, you can't help but be appalled at the low quality of those spunky filmmakers' products. Witness such trash as Linda Thompson's widely distributed videos on the Waco holocaust, videos that did much to spark outrage over the government's conduct but also muddied the water with inaccurate charges about disinformation plots and fire-throwing tanks.

But don't write off video yet. The technology is getting cheaper, the know-how is spreading farther, and when it works, it's very powerful. And, once more, the Internet may make things easier. If the commercial powers-that-be ever deliver the video-on-demand services they have been promising us, there will be little to stop independent filmmakers and videographers from turning that technology to their own ends, bypassing distribution costs by sending their movies directly to Net-surfers.

Print media. Let's not forget the printed word. It's not just there on computer screens. It's on good old-fashioned pages, xeroxed and stapled and stacked in bars, stores, restaurants. I refer, of course, to zines, those irregular (in every sense) periodicals devoted to everything from anarcho-syndicalism to breakfast cereals to the Rapture.

The mass media have discovered the zine world, and are promoting a sanitized, domesticated version of zinedom in its Style sections and Sunday supplements. Other independent print media have not received quite as much attention. The *fax network*, for example, exists in the hazy territory between the zine and the telephone tree. The *chapbook* can be a mass-market affair, but more and more poetry collections are essentially one-shot zines. And the *flier* is one of the oldest media in the world, and still among the most potent: there's no better way to advertise a local concert, lecture, demonstration, or sublease than by posting a hundred little wall posters around town. (It is also one of the most censored media, usually informally—certain fliers simply disappear more quickly than others—and sometimes not. Not long ago, Seattle actually tried to ban public postering.)

But these are not *new* media. Somehow, we've landed back in the world of wall posters and cafes, the meshwork of conversations and rumors that's as old as society itself. But there's a difference. Fifty years ago, it looked like the mass media might overwhelm that human world. Now the human world threatens to overwhelm the mass media, invading the airwaves and computer screens that were once reserved for the elite. It's reached the point where the news and culture industries have started marketing their wares as "independent" even when they're not. Record companies start small subsidiaries, packaging their releases to look like those of an indie label. Big-budget movies advertise themselves as "independent films." Mainstream magazines ape zine styles.

None of which stills the flood of truly independent work, of fine alternative news, analysis, and art. And if there has also been an explosion of smut, paranoia, and drivel, so be it: at least it's *our* smut, paranoia, and drivel. This populism comes unvarnished.

Jesse Walker writes from Washington, D.C.

ECONOMICS

Wiping Out the Middle Class

by Bob Djurdjevic

Dawn is 25. Marty is 27. Dawn works as a preschool teacher at a local private Christian school. Marty is a laborer at a retail distribution center.

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This Phoenix, Arizona, couple with a small child bring home about $30,000 per year. Yet they could not afford to buy Christmas presents this year.

Now, not putting more cash into some merchant's pockets is no great loss. But keeping a young family constantly on a treadmill without a respite is an American tragedy of the 1990's. Especially when, as if adding insult to injury, we see billionaires like Ted Turner get a tax break for donating $1 billion to the United Nations, while middle-class Americans like Dawn and Marty often have to resort to buying even milk and bread on credit.

Nor is this some sort of a regional phenomenon. Here is, for example, an excerpt from a letter I received from a newspaper editor in the nation's capital: "In Washington, the level of income required to achieve a 'middle-class' standard of living—e.g., a single family home in a decent neighborhood, enough money to raise at least two children responsibly, etc.—is about $80,000 annually. Hardly a 'middle-class' wage. If I recall correctly, government statistics define a 'middle-class' family income as $34,000 or so. . . . Meanwhile, the 'plutocrats' are moving into garish $600,000-million-plus homes with more square footage than a small English castle, driving two or three $50,000 luxury cars, and keeping their kids out of the dead-end public schools."

Clearly, the rich are getting richer, the poor poorer. Phoenix, Washington, and many other American cities have their own "Great American Divide" stories, but nowhere is the desecration of the American Dream more visible than in the "financial capital of the world," Gotham City—host both to Wall Street and the United Nations.

As Bill Clinton and his entourage used a South Bronx neighborhood in New York for a pre-Christmas photo-op in early December; as Wall Street celebrated another "bull" market year; as the economists hailed the supposed strength of the American economy, especially in contrast to the Asian crisis, the Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (COBPP) released a devastating report. Income inequality has been growing in 48 of the 50 states. Only in Alaska and North Dakota has the gap between the incomes of the richest and the poorest residents narrowed over the past 20 years.

Between the late 1970's and the mid-1990's, the incomes of upper-income families with children increased in every state. On average, incomes of the richest fifth of families increased by 30 percent after adjusting for inflation. In sharp contrast, incomes of the poorest fifth of families with children decreased in 44 of the 50 states for an overall decline of 44 percent. Nor did the so-called "middle class" fare much better. The incomes of middle-income families dropped by 22 percent during the same period.

"Robust economic growth in recent years has done little to turn around the long-term trend toward increasing inequality," said Kathy Larin, co-author of the report and a policy analyst at COBPP. And guess where the Great American Divide, which separates the rich and the poor, is widest? New York.

The ten states where the gap is greatest between the incomes of the highest-income and lowest-income families with children are (in declining order) New York, Louisiana, New Mexico, Arizona, Connecticut, California, Florida, Kentucky, Alabama, and West Virginia, the COBPP report said. New York is also leading the nation in terms of the gap between high-income and middle-income families with children. During the past two decades, the gap widened most rapidly in New York, Indiana, Arizona, California, Georgia, Connecticut, West Virginia, Texas, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. In other words, New York is America's "plutocracy capital."

The latest census data merely confirm the earlier trends. In an August 1997 report, for example, the same Washington-based research organization noted that the wealthiest one percent of Americans received as much after-tax income in 1994 as the bottom 35 percent of the population—combined. The top 20 percent of the population had nearly as much income as the bottom 80 percent.

Between 1977 and 1994—the first and last years for which COBPP issued such statistics—the share of the national after-tax income received by the top one percent of the population rose substantially. In 1977, the bottom 35 percent of the population had nearly twice as much after-tax income as the top one percent. By 1994, these two groups had essentially the same amount of income. "Income has become much more concentrated among a relative handful of the wealthiest Americans," noted Isaac Shapiro, a senior fellow at COBPP and co-author of the report. The average after-tax income of the top one percent of families equaled $374,000 in 1994, or 15 times the average after-tax income for the middle fifth of families, which stood at $25,650.

In fact, the COBPP studies understate the width of the Great American Divide. The census data used for its report did not include capital gains income as family income, for example, understating the incomes of the top fifth of families who receive most of the capital gains income. The census data also did not reflect earnings above $100,000 for any one job, further understating the incomes of the American elite.

On the other hand, partly offsetting those factors was a corresponding omission from the data of welfare benefits, such as food stamps, which poor families may receive. In all, however, the COBPP said its report "understates income disparities between the top and middle fifth, and, to a lesser degree, those between the top and bottom fifth." In other words, the United States is even more of a plutocracy than these alarming numbers suggest. And the disparities between the rich and the poor are approaching those in some other countries before their elites were sent to the dustbin of history by the common folk upset over "taxation without representation."

"It's a few years down the line, but our class disparity and age disparity (wealth, privileges, and tax break for the non-poor elderly, which is about 40 percent of the elderly) will split the population not just along class lines but also along generational lines," writes a college professor in Pennsylvania. "It's gonna get ugly in about 20 years, maybe sooner." It *may* happen sooner—when the Baby Boomers start cashing *en masse* their retirement checks. Many will discover that this money is gone, since by then the Wall Street Hoover will have sucked it out of the pension funds.

When will that happen? Probably within the next ten years. So, if you're a Baby Boomer counting on spending your old age in an easy chair funded by a big business pension, consider an early retirement. Then follow it up with some sort of Golden Age entrepreneurial venture, the new Golden Parachute of America's dwindling middle class.

Bob Djurdjevic heads up Annex Research (www.djurdjevic.com), *which analyzes geopolitical affairs, and Truth in Media* (www.beograd.com/truth).

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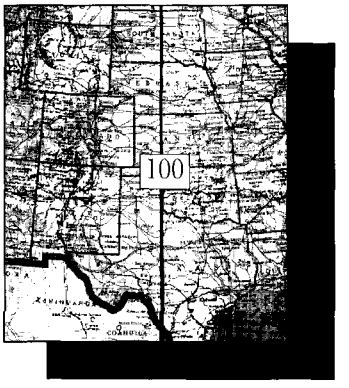
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

What Do Environmentalists Want?

In a world filled with perplexity, inscrutability, and conundrum, two major mysteries at least are not unfathomable. What do women want? The answer has had human beings stumped from the time of the origin of species, yet the answer is perfectly plain: they don't know. The question of what environmentalists want is of more recent vintage, but here too there is no mystery, only a set of answers to be teased out: they know, but they're not saying. It would help of course if women spent less of their time talking about what even they don't understand, and if environmentalists were not intent on covering up what they understand very well and mean fanatically, but then life, as the prophet said, is unfair.

Out here in God's wild West the dwindling percentage of the population that are really Westerners keep environmentalists under the most strict surveillance, as the German government keeps tabs on neo-Nazis and the FBI tracks the vast right-wing conspiracy. No one takes them at their word, but that does not mean that their word is therefore taken lightly. Do environmentalists want to "save" Yellowstone Park, or present it gift-wrapped to a committee of the United Nations? Would the Greater Yellowstone Council be satisfied with managing the park and the immediate drainage area surrounding it, or does it secretly envision control over a region extending from Great Falls, Montana, south to the Uinta Mountains in eastern Utah? Is the environmentalist movement working for the abolition of grazing on all of the public lands, or in "sensitive areas" only? If the latter is so, what is environmentalism's current definition of a sensitive area? Environmentalists hector us regarding the need to achieve a sustainable population without coming clean by giving us the hard figures. Would 200 million people amount to a sustainable number of Americans? One hundred twenty million? Twenty million? The forcible reduction of a total population



of 260 million inhabitants to a sustainable rump of 20 million would be bad news for 240 million living Americans, and perhaps the environmentalist dream for the future is less sanguinary. Yet what environmentalists, if successful, have in store for the country may be hardly less unpleasant for everyone concerned.

Environmentalists present themselves as a nonpartisan movement in service to a transcendent cause beyond party politics, appealing to the most well-meaning and enlightened Americans of every political persuasion. In fact environmentalism is very much an enterprise of the left: no maverick, it carries the brand of the beast high on its rufus flank. In this respect the charge so often directed at environmentalists—that they are indifferent, even hostile to the just claims of the human race—distracts attention from the human-regarding aspect of their agenda, which include tacit support for continued mass immigration to the United States in spite of demonstrations showing conclusively how maintaining immigration at the present level assures that two generations of environmental legislation will, in two or three generations more, have been obviated completely by a population explosion produced by Third World immigrants incapable of telling a park ranger from a Juarez cop, or a snail darter from a sardine.

Environmentalism shares and approves the Establishment program because it is an important part of that Establishment, not the enemy of it—as Edward Abbey, a real environmentalist and an honest man, was. Though elected on the Democratic ticket, Bill Clinton appears to have gained the presidential office while remaining indifferent to environmentalists and their concerns. Nevertheless, within a year or so of his inauguration, Clinton had launched the War on the West and commissioned Bruce Babbitt as his McClellan. An explanation of how the turnaround came about may be discerned by a careful reading of Alston Chase's *In a Dark Wood*, which inspires a possible scenario for the President's budding relationship with the green lobbyists. Look here, they might have said to him, we know you're a big-city boy from Little Rock, Arkansas, more interested in chasing skirts than butterflies, happier jetting to Hilton Head on Air Force One than scaling the Grand Teton. But you and us—we can do business, see? Your aim as Commander in Chief, Leader of the Free World, and the Man Who Shook Hands With John Kennedy is to extend the reach of the federal government into every valley, plain, and mountain in America, every nook and cranny in the life of every American. You want to deconstruct the old Constitution and turn every one of the 50 states into a fiefdom of the government at Washington, Dee Cee? Well, we want the same thing exactly. Play ball with us, we'll all be happy as skinnydippers in the Yellowstone warm springs, and we won't even bug you about putting those condos down there on the Whitewater River after you and Hillary leave office. To tell you the truth, Arkansas is mostly ruined for us already. But keep your hands off Big Timber, Montana, and Hillsboro, New Mexico. Ted Turner and Jane want those.

The Clinton administration has begun a renewed offensive on behalf of restive New Western interests concerned that the War on the West has yet to achieve the total effect recommended by William Tecumseh Sherman as being the necessary and appropriate end of modern warfare. Addressing a public forum on the future of the American public lands in Boise, Idaho, in mid-February, the directors of the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service—all three of them Clinton appointees—insisted that their agencies are firmly committed

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to the President's policy of favoring the tourism and recreation industries at the expense of mining, timber, and agriculture. In January, the administration announced an 18-month moratorium on roadbuilding into 30 million acres of federally owned land, while a bipartisan bill recently introduced in the House of Representatives would end all timber sales and logging operations in the national forests. Michael Dombeck, the Forest Service chief, explained that his agency is simply rediscovering its original mandate as restorer and protector of the national forest lands, while Robert Stanton, director of the Park Service, identified his constituency as urbanites wanting to establish a cultural and historical rapport with a national treasure.

Environmentalists, when they are being prudent by making nice with the great unwashed, talk about the cultural enrichment that occurs when Americans rediscover their heritage. They explain that they are concerned for people who have lost all contact with, and feeling for, nature and propose to help them regrow the roots they have severed. Of course the rootgrowing essential to the process they envision is literal rather than metaphorical: the way to reestablish a connection with nature is to work with it and develop it, not to play in it, admire it, or put it on videocamera. Environmentalism, whatever the environmentalists say, is not about bringing people closer to nature; it is about separating them still further from it.

As with every ism, the principal clue to environmentalism is the nature of the people who created it. If environmentalism were really about rootedness in nature, it would be predominantly an agrarian movement, invented and championed by rural people. Actually, the movement is a product of the suburbs, the brainchild of people born and bred in an environment that is more limbo than reality. Environmentalists are mostly upper-middle to upper-class people, professionals and technocrats educated beyond their capacity for both wisdom and common sense, fundamentally ignorant of what they profess to love most because they have failed to acquire a real experience of it. In this respect, of course, they are no different from others of their class who are *not* environmentalists. This is why the novels of Ernest Hemingway are currently out of fashion, a vagary of the public taste having nothing to do with macho matings in sleeping bags or Robert Cohen's nose. In Hemingway's day, as now, Americans who paid attention to serious literature were the educated men and women of the middle and upper-middle classes. Where they differ from their counterparts today is in their background, their experience, their place of growing up. Middle-aged readers of fiction before the 1960's might be city-bred, country-bred, or Main Streeters. Whichever they were (well-to-do urbanites, like Hemingway's family, vacationed in the country then) they remembered how it was to hook a trout, row a boat around a point in a lake, wait out a big blow in a rustic cabin, raise a tent and cook flapjacks over a campfire. Nowadays, by contrast, this type of general reader no longer exists. Purchasers and readers of books are overwhelmingly people of suburban upbringing and experience. For them "Big Two-Hearted River" conveys no shock of recognition; to the extent that it has any effect at all, the story serves as an unpleasant reminder that even artists and people of talent, not very long ago, grew up in Hicksville and amused themselves like rednecks.

The yokel's fear and suspicion of the big city and its inhabitants has been summer stock in American culture—the source of innumerable japes, gags, and gigs—for a century and a half, yet the city slicker has fears and suspicions of his own. In an astounding passage from a recent book, the late Diana Trilling describes her and her husband's apprehensions on the eve of the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939:

> The idea that fascism is the consequence of war, even a war *against* fascism, lasted long and traveled far among the intellectuals of Lionel's and my generation. . . . [W]e and our friends contemplated what the war had in store for our young airmen when they would no longer have their giant bombers to command and had to resume their old civilian lives. How could one expect them to return to their factories and gas stations?

So far as this bizarre speculation makes any sense at all, it does so only if the reader assumes that the factories Mrs. Trilling had in mind are in Omaha, Nebraska, the gas stations in Bill, Wyoming, and Holly Springs, Mississippi.

What do environmentalists want? This much we know, they and their water-carriers in the federal government having said as much: the destruction of traditional industrialism in the West, and its replacement by soft industrialism—tourism, recreation, and "cultural enrichment." In the Southwest especially, the process of dispossession, destruction, and displacement is already well advanced, as environmental groups file suit to bring logging to a halt in the forests of Arizona and New Mexico, bid against ranchers seeking to renew their grazing leases, and gain control over private property by appeals to the Endangered Species Act.

And this much we may infer, from their actions as well as from their peculiar vagueness, their thundering silences—to say nothing of such crackpot schemes as turning the Plains states from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains into a commons for the American bison to run on. Environmentalists envision nothing less than the eventual removal of rural Americans from the countryside, which will thereupon be declared pristine lands which every American will be required to obtain a permit to visit, as today one needs a permit to explore the Grand Canyon and Canyonlands National Park. This action, necessarily protracted in its duration, will recreate the American hinterland as a vast wilderness preserve to which only members of the elite national (and international) class will be granted access for the purpose of "necessary development in the national interest." Relocated in the great post-industrial cities of America, the unregenerate and barbarian redneck population will be domesticated through safe technocratic employment and reeducated in the doctrines of political correctness, multiculturalism, globalism, free trade, and world eco-government. Their guns will be taken from them, and so will their beer and their red-eye. All blood sports, including fishing, will be prohibited, while conviction on a charge of square-dancing or listening to country-western music will be punishable by an overnight in the slammer. At long last, America will have been made safe for rocks, grizzly bears, people of color, and Democracy.

Whoever finds this prophecy extreme and absurdist needs only to recall that we live in a country whose First Lady has expressed the desire to redefine what it means to be a human being living in the 20th century.

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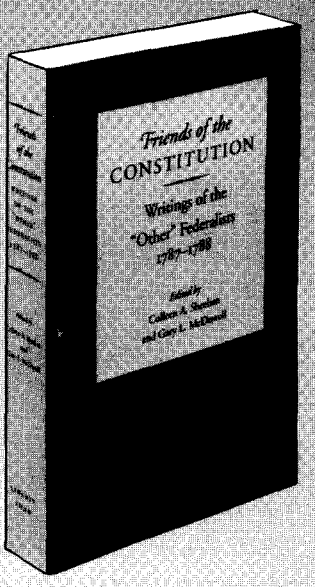
A Classic Work on America's Founding

FRIENDS OF THE CONSTITUTION
WRITINGS OF THE "OTHER" FEDERALISTS, 1787-1788

Edited by Colleen A. Sheehan and Gary L. McDowell



Though The Federalist Papers are rightly renowned as a primary exposition of the principles and purposes of the proposed United States Constitution, there were many writers other than John Jay, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton who in 1787 and 1788 argued for the Constitution's ratification. Indeed, as Herbert J. Storing, Jr. once observed, "[t]hese 'other' Federalist writings carried the main burden of the public defense of the proposed Constitution...[and] several of them were vastly more influential than The Federalist." In a collection that is certain to make a major contribution to our understanding of the American Founding, Friends of the Constitution brings together forty-nine of the most important of these "other" Federalists' writings. Included are the original texts of pamphlets, speeches, and other proratification writings of George Washington, Benjamin Rush, Nicholas Collin, John Dickinson, James Wilson, Tench Coxe, Benjamin Franklin, Noah Webster, Roger Sherman, Fisher Ames, Peletiah Webster, Samuel Tenny, Stephen Hopkins, Oliver Ellsworth, and David Ramsay. Seperately they address the underlying themes of the historic Federalist/Anti-Federalist debate: "The Necessity of Union," "Energetic but Limited Government," and "Popular Government and Civic Virtue." The text includes Storing's important assessment of these writings, and the volume includes citations to Storing's monumental seven-volume Complete Anti-Federalist.

Colleen A. Sheehan is professor of Political Science at Villanova University.
Gary L. McDowell is director of the Institute of United States Studies, University of London.

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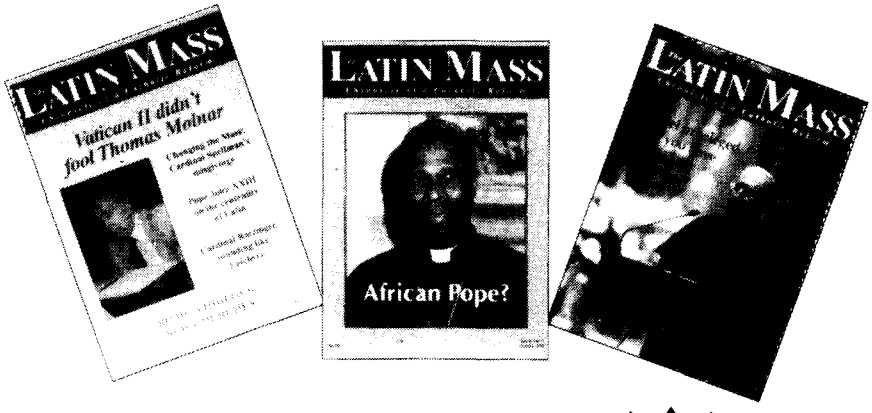

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- Changing the Mass: Cardinal Spellman's Misgivings
- The Mother of All Mosques (Thomas Molnar on the Meaning of the Moslems' New Home in Rome)
- Pontifical Universities: Not All They're Cracked Up To Be
- Traditional Art and Architecture Returns
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